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EDITED BY THE

REV. W. LUCAS COLLINS, M.A.

CICERO

By REV. W. LUCAS COLLINS, M.A.

PLINY'S LETTERS

By REV. ALFRED CHURCH, M.A.

AND

REV. W. J. BRODRIBB, M.A.

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CICERO.
PLINY.

C I C E R O

BY THE

REV. W. LUCAS COLLINS, M.A.

AUTHOR OF

'ETONIANA,' 'THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS,' ETC.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

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MDCCCLXXI

I HAVE to acknowledge my obligations to Mr Forsyth's well-known 'Life of Cicero,' especially as a guide to the biographical materials which abound in his Orations and Letters. Mr Long's scholarly volumes have also been found useful. For the translations, such as they are, I am responsible. If I could have met with any which seemed to me more satisfactory, I would gladly have adopted them.

W. L. C.

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C I C E R O.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION.

WHEN we speak, in the language of our title-page, of the 'Ancient Classics,' we must remember that the word 'ancient' is to be taken with a considerable difference, in one sense. Ancient all the Greek and Roman authors are, as dated comparatively with our modern era. But as to the antique character of their writings, there is often a difference which is not merely one of date. The poetry of Homer and Hesiod is ancient, as having been sung and written when the society in which the authors lived, and to which they addressed themselves, was in its comparative infancy. The chronicles of Herodotus are ancient, partly from their subject-matter and partly from their primitive style. But in this sense there are ancient authors belonging to every nation which has a literature of its own. Viewed in this light, the history

of Thucydides, the letters and orations of Cicero, are not ancient at all. Bede, and Chaucer, and Matthew of Paris, and Froissart, are far more redolent of antiquity. The several books which make up what we call the Bible are all ancient, no doubt; but even between the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and the Epistles of St Paul there is a far wider real interval than the mere lapse of centuries.

In one respect, the times of Cicero, in spite of their complicated politics, should have more interest for a modern reader than most of what is called Ancient History. Forget the date but for a moment, and there is scarcely anything ancient about them. The scenes and actors are modern—terribly modern; far more so than the middle ages of Christendom. Between the times of our own Plantagenets and Georges, for instance, there is a far wider gap, in all but years, than between the consulships of Cæsar and Napoleon. The habits of life, the ways of thinking, the family affections, the tastes of the Romans of Cicero's day, were in many respects wonderfully like our own; the political jealousies and rivalries have repeated themselves again and again in the last two or three centuries of Europe: their code of political honour and morality, debased as it was, was not much lower than that which was held by some great statesmen a generation or two before us. Let us be thankful if the most frightful of their vices were the exclusive shame of paganism.

It was in an old but humble country-house, near the town of Arpinum, under the Volscian hills, that Marcus Tullius Cicero was born, one hundred and six years before the Christian era. The family was of an-

cient 'equestrian'* dignity, but as none of its members had hitherto borne any office of state, it did not rank as 'noble.' His grandfather and his father had borne the same three names—the last an inheritance from some forgotten ancestor, who had either been successful in the cultivation of vetches (*cicer*), or, as less complimentary traditions said, had a wart of that shape upon his nose. The grandfather was still living when the little Cicero was born; a stout old conservative, who had successfully resisted the attempt to introduce vote by ballot into his native town, and hated the Greeks (who were just then coming into fashion) as heartily as his English representative, fifty years ago, might have hated a Frenchman. "The more Greek a man knew," he protested, "the greater rascal he turned out." The father was a man of quiet habits, taking no part even in local politics, given to books, and to the enlargement and improvement of the old family house, which, up to his time, seems not to have been more than a modest grange. The situation (on a small island formed by the little river Fibrenus†) was beautiful and romantic; and the love for it, which grew up with the young Cicero as a child, he never lost in the

* The *Equites* were originally those who served in the Roman cavalry; but latterly all citizens came to be reckoned in the class who had a certain property qualification, and who could prove free descent up to their grandfather.

† Now known as Il Fiume della Posta. Fragments of Cicero's villa are thought to have been discovered built into the walls of the deserted convent of San Dominico. The ruin known as 'Cicero's Tower' has probably no connection with him.

busy days of his manhood. It was in his eyes, he said, what Ithaca was to Ulysses,

“A rough, wild nurse-land, but whose crops are men.”

There was an aptness in the quotation ; for at Arpinum, a few years before, was born that Caius Marius, seven times consul of Rome, who had at least the virtue of manhood in him, if he had few besides.

But the quiet country gentleman was ambitious for his son. Cicero's father, like Horace's, determined to give him the best education in his power ; and of course the best education was to be found in Rome, and the best teachers there were Greeks. So to Rome young Marcus was taken in due time, with his younger brother Quintus. They lodged with their uncle-in-law, Aculeo, a lawyer of some distinction, who had a house in rather a fashionable quarter of the city, and moved in good society ; and the two boys attended the Greek lectures with their town cousins. Greek was as necessary a part of a Roman gentleman's education in those days as Latin and French are with us now ; like Latin, it was the key to literature (for the Romans had as yet, it must be remembered, nothing worth calling literature of their own) ; and, like French, it was the language of refinement and the play of polished society. Let us hope that by this time the good old grandfather was gathered peacefully into his urn ; it might have broken his heart to have seen how enthusiastically his grandson Marcus threw himself into this new-fangled study ; and one of those letters of his riper years, stuffed full of Greek terms and phrases even to

affectation, would have drawn anything but blessings from the old gentleman if he had lived to hear them read.

Young Cicero went through the regular curriculum—grammar, rhetoric, and the Greek poets and historians. Like many other youthful geniuses, he wrote a good deal of poetry of his own, which his friends, as was natural, thought very highly of at the time, and of which he himself retained the same good opinion to the end of his life, as would have been natural to few men except Cicero. But his more important studies began after he had assumed the ‘white gown’ which marked the emergence of the young Roman from boyhood into more responsible life—at sixteen years of age. He then entered on a special education for the bar. It could scarcely be called a profession, for an advocate’s practice at Rome was gratuitous; but it was the best training for public life;—it was the ready means, to an able and eloquent man, of gaining that popular influence which would secure his election in due course to the great magistracies which formed the successive steps to political power. The mode of studying law at Rome bore a very considerable resemblance to the preparation for the English bar. Our modern law-student purchases his admission to the chambers of some special pleader or conveyancer, where he is supposed to learn his future business by copying precedents and answering cases, and he also attends the public lectures at the Inns of Court. So at Rome the young aspirant was to be found (but at a much earlier hour than would suit the Temple or

Lincoln's Inn) in the open hall of some great jurist's house, listening to his opinions given to the throng of clients who crowded there every morning ; while his more zealous pupils would accompany him in his stroll in the Forum, and attend his pleadings in the courts or his speeches on the Rostra, either taking down upon their tablets, or storing in their memories, his *dicta* upon legal questions.* In such wise Cicero became the pupil of Mucius Scævola, whose house was called "the oracle of Rome"—scarcely ever leaving his side, as he himself expresses it ; and after that great lawyer's death, attaching himself in much the same way to a younger cousin of the same name and scarcely less reputation. Besides this, to arm himself at all points for his proposed career, he read logic with Diodotus the Stoic, studied the action of Æsop and Roscius—then the stars of the Roman stage—declaimed aloud like Demosthenes in private, made copious notes, practised translation in order to form a written style, and read hard day and night. He trained severely as an intellectual athlete ; and if none of his contemporaries attained such splendid success, perhaps none worked so hard for it. He made use, too, of certain special advantages which were open to him—little appreciated, or at least seldom acknowledged, by the men of his day—the society and conversation of elegant and accomplished women. In Scævola's domestic circle, where the mother, the daughters, and the grand-daughters

* These *dicta*, or 'opinions,' of the great jurists, acquired a sort of legal validity in the Roman law-courts, like 'cases' with us.

successively seem to have been such charming talkers that language found new graces from their lips, the young advocate learnt some of his not least valuable lessons. "It makes no little difference," said he in his riper years, "what style of expression one becomes familiar with in the associations of daily life." It was another point of resemblance between the age of Cicero and the times in which we live—the influence of the "queens of society," whether for good or evil.

But no man could be completely educated for a public career at Rome until he had been a soldier. By what must seem to us a mistake in the Republican system—a mistake which we have seen made more than once in the late American war—high political offices were necessarily combined with military command. The highest minister of state, consul or prætor, however hopelessly civilian in tastes and antecedents, might be sent to conduct a campaign in Italy or abroad at a few hours' notice. If a man was a heaven-born general, all went well; if not, he had usually a chance of learning in the school of defeat. It was desirable, at all events, that he should have seen what war was in his youth. Young Cicero served his first campaign, at the age of eighteen, under the father of a man whom he was to know only too well in after life—Pompey the Great—and in the division of the army which was commanded by Sylla as lieutenant-general. He bore arms only for a year or two, and probably saw no very arduous service, or we should certainly have heard of it from himself; and he never was in camp again until he took the chief command,

thirty-seven years afterwards, as pro-consul in Cilicia. He was at Rome, leading a quiet student-life—happily for himself, too young to be forced or tempted into an active part—during the bloody feuds between Sylla and the younger Marius.

He seems to have made his first appearance as an advocate when he was about twenty-five, in some suit of which we know nothing. Two years afterwards he undertook his first defence of a prisoner on a capital charge, and secured by his eloquence the acquittal of Sextus Roscius on an accusation of having murdered his father. The charge appears to have been a mere conspiracy, wholly unsupported by evidence; but the accuser was a favourite with Sylla, whose power was all but absolute; and the innocence of the accused was a very insufficient protection before a Roman jury of those days. What kind of considerations, besides the merits of the case and the rhetoric of counsel, did usually sway these tribunals, we shall see hereafter. In consequence of this decided success, briefs came in upon the young pleader almost too quickly. Like many other successful orators, he had to combat some natural deficiencies; he had inherited from his father a somewhat delicate constitution; his lungs were not powerful, and his voice required careful management; and the loud declamation and vehement action which he had adopted from his models—and which were necessary conditions of success in the large arena in which a Roman advocate had to plead—he found very hard work. He left Rome for a while, and retired for rest and change to Athens.

The six months which he spent there, though busy and studious, must have been very pleasant ones. To one like Cicero, Athens was at once classic and holy ground. It combined all those associations and attractions which we might now expect to find in a visit to the capitals of Greece and of Italy, and a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Poetry, rhetoric, philosophy, religion—all, to his eyes, had their cradle there. It was the home of all that was literature to him ; and there, too, were the great Eleusinian mysteries—which are mysteries still, but which contained under their veil whatever faith in the Invisible and Eternal rested in the mind of an enlightened pagan. There can be little doubt but that Cicero took this opportunity of initiation. His brother Quintus and one of his cousins were with him at Athens ; and in that city he also renewed his acquaintance with an old schoolfellow, Titus Pomponius, who lived so long in the city, and became so thoroughly Athenian in his tastes and habits, that he is better known to us, as he was to his contemporaries, by the surname of Atticus, which was given him half in jest, than by his more sonorous Roman name. It is to the accidental circumstance of Atticus remaining so long a voluntary exile from Rome, and to the correspondence which was maintained between the two friends, with occasional intervals, for something like four-and-twenty years, that we are indebted for a more thorough insight into the character of Cicero than we have as to any other of the great minds of antiquity ; nearly four hundred of his letters to Atticus, written in all the familiar confidence of private friendship by

a man by no means reticent as to his personal feelings, having been preserved to us. Atticus's replies are lost; it is said that he was prudent enough, after his friend's unhappy death, to reclaim and destroy them. They would perhaps have told us, in his case, not very much that we care to know beyond what we know already. Rich, luxurious, with elegant tastes and easy morality—a true Epicurean, as he boasted himself to be—Atticus had nevertheless a kind heart and an open hand. He has generally been called selfish, somewhat unfairly; at least his selfishness never took the form of indifference or unkindness to others. In one sense he was a truer philosopher than Cicero: for he seems to have acted through life on that maxim of Socrates which his friend professed to approve, but certainly never followed,—that “a wise man kept out of public business.” His vocation was certainly not patriotism; but the worldly wisdom which kept well with men of all political colours, and eschewed the wretched intrigues and bloody feuds of Rome, stands out in no unfavourable contrast with the conduct of many of her *soi-disant* patriots. If he declined to take a side himself, men of all parties resorted to him in their adversity; and the man who befriended the younger Marius in his exile, protected the widow of Antony, gave shelter on his estates to the victims of the triumvirate's proscription, and was always ready to offer his friend Cicero both his house and his purse whenever the political horizon clouded round him,—this man was surely as good a citizen as the noisiest clamourer for “liberty” in the Forum, or the readiest

hand with the dagger. He kept his life and his property safe through all those years of peril and proscription, with less sacrifice of principle than many who had made louder professions, and died—by a singular act of voluntary starvation, to make short work with an incurable disease—at a ripe old age ; a godless Epicurean, no doubt, but not the worst of them.

We must return to Cicero, and deal somewhat briefly with the next few years of his life. He extended his foreign tour for two years, visiting the chief cities of Asia Minor, remaining for a short time at Rhodes to take lessons once more from his old tutor Molo the rhetorician, and everywhere availing himself of the lectures of the most renowned Greek professors, to correct and improve his own style of composition and delivery. Soon after his return to Rome, he married. Of the character of his wife Terentia very different views have been taken. She appears to have written to him very kindly during his long forced absences. Her letters have not reached us ; but in all her husband's replies she is mentioned in terms of apparently the most sincere affection. He calls her repeatedly his "darling"—"the delight of his eyes"—"the best of mothers ;" yet he procured a divorce from her, for no distinctly assigned reason, after a married life of thirty years, during which we find no trace of any serious domestic unhappiness. The imputations on her honour made by Plutarch, and repeated by others, seem utterly without foundation ; and Cicero's own share in the transaction is not improved by the fact of his taking another wife as soon as possible—a ward of his

own, an almost girl, with whom he did not live a year before a second divorce released him. Terentia is said also to have had an imperious temper; but the only ground for this assertion seems to have been that she quarrelled occasionally with her sister-in-law Pomponia, sister of Atticus and wife of Quintus Cicero; and since Pomponia, by her own brother's account, showed her temper very disagreeably to her husband, the feud between the ladies was more likely to have been her fault than Terentia's. But the very low notion of the marriage relations entertained by both the later Greeks and Romans helps to throw some light upon a proceeding which would otherwise seem very mysterious. Terentia, as is pretty plain from the hints in her husband's letters, was not a good manager in money matters; there is room for suspicion that she was not even an honest one in his absence, and was "making a purse" for herself: she had thus failed in one of the only two qualifications which, according to Demosthenes—an authority who ranked very high in Cicero's eyes—were essential in a wife, to be "a faithful house-guardian" and "a fruitful mother." She did not die of a broken heart; she lived to be 104, and, according to Dio Cassius, to have three more husbands. Divorces were easy enough at Rome, and had the lady been a rich widow, there might be nothing so improbable in this latter part of the story, though she was fifty years old at the date of this first divorce.*

* Cato, who is the favourite impersonation of all the moral virtues of his age, divorced his wife—to oblige a friend!

CHAPTER II.

PUBLIC CAREER.—IMPEACHMENT OF VERRES.

INCREASING reputation as a brilliant and successful pleader, and the social influence which this brought with it, secured the rapid succession of Cicero to the highest public offices. Soon after his marriage he was elected Quæstor—the first step on the official ladder—which, as he already possessed the necessary property qualification, gave him a seat in the Senate for life. The Ædileship and Prætorship followed subsequently, each as early, in point of age, as it could legally be held.* His practice as an advocate suffered no interrup-

* The Quæstors (of whom there were at this time twenty) acted under the Senate as State treasurers. The Consul or other officer who commanded in chief during a campaign would be accompanied by one of them as paymaster-general.

The Ædiles, who were four in number, had the care of all public buildings, markets, roads, and the State property generally. They had also the superintendence of the national festivals and public games.

The duties of the Prætors, of whom there were eight, were principally judicial. The two seniors, called the 'City' and 'Foreign' respectively, corresponded roughly to our Home and Foreign Secretaries. These were all gradual steps to the office of Consul.

tion, except that his Quæstorship involved his spending a year in Sicily. The Prætor who was appointed to the government of that province* had under him two quæstors, who were a kind of comptrollers of the exchequer; and Cicero was appointed to the western district, having his headquarters at Lilybæum. In the administration of his office there he showed himself a thorough man of business. There was a dearth of corn at Rome that year, and Sicily was the great granary of the empire. The energetic measures which the new Quæstor took fully met the emergency. He was liberal to the tenants of the State, courteous and accessible to all, upright in his administration, and, above all, he kept his hands clean from bribes and speculation. The provincials were as much astonished as delighted: for Rome was not in the habit of sending them such officers. They invented honours for him such as had never been bestowed on any minister before.

* The provinces of Rome, in their relation to the mother-state of Italy, may be best compared with our own government of India, or such of our crown colonies as have no representative assembly. They had each their governor or lieutenant-governor, who must have been an ex-minister of Rome: a man who had been Consul went out with the rank of "pro-consul,"—one who had been Prætor with the rank of "pro-prætor." These held office for one or two years, and had the power of life and death within their respective jurisdictions. They had under them one or more officers who bore the title of Quæstor, who collected the taxes and had the general management of the revenues of the province. The provinces at this time were Sicily, Sardinia with Corsica, Spain and Gaul (each in two divisions); Greece, divided into Macedonia and Achaia (the Morea); Asia, Syria, Cilicia, Bithynia, Cyprus, and Africa in four divisions. Others were added afterwards, under the Empire.

No wonder the young official's head (he was not much over thirty) was somewhat turned. "I thought," he said, in one of his speeches afterwards—introducing with a quiet humour, and with all a practised orator's skill, one of those personal anecdotes which relieve a long speech—"I thought in my heart, at the time, that the people at Rome must be talking of nothing but my quæstorship." And he goes on to tell his audience how he was undeceived.

"The people of Sicily had devised for me unprecedented honours. So I left the island in a state of great elation, thinking that the Roman people would at once offer me everything without my seeking. But when I was leaving my province, and on my road home, I happened to land at Puteoli just at the time when a good many of our most fashionable people are accustomed to resort to that neighbourhood. I very nearly collapsed, gentlemen, when a man asked me what day I had left Rome, and whether there was any news stirring? When I made answer that I was returning from my province—'Oh! yes, to be sure,' said he; 'Africa, I believe?' 'No,' said I to him, considerably annoyed and disgusted; 'from Sicily.' Then somebody else, with the air of a man who knew all about it, said to him—'What! don't you know that he was Quæstor at *Syracuse*?' [It was at Lilybæum—quite a different district.] No need to make a long story of it; I swallowed my indignation, and made as though I, like the rest, had come there for the waters. But I am not sure, gentlemen, whether that scene did not do me more good than if everybody then and there had publicly

congratulated me. For after I had thus found out that the people of Rome have somewhat deaf ears, but very keen and sharp eyes, I left off cogitating what people would hear about me; I took care that thenceforth they should see me before them every day: I lived in their sight, I stuck close to the Forum; the porter at my gate refused no man admittance—my very sleep was never allowed to be a plea against an audience.” *

Did we not say that Cicero was modern, not ancient? Have we not here the original of that Cambridge senior wrangler, who, happening to enter a London theatre at the same moment with the king, bowed all round with a gratified embarrassment, thinking that the audience rose and cheered at *him*?

It was while he held the office of *Ædile* that he made his first appearance as public prosecutor, and brought to justice the most important criminal of the day. Verres, late *Prætor* in Sicily, was charged with high crimes and misdemeanours in his government. The grand scale of his offences, and the absorbing interest of the trial, have led to his case being quoted as an obvious parallel to that of Warren Hastings, though with much injustice to the latter, so far as it may seem to imply any comparison of moral character. This Verres, the corrupt son of a corrupt father, had during his three years' rule heaped on the unhappy province every evil which tyranny and rapacity could inflict. He had found it prosperous and contented: he left it exhausted and smarting under its wrongs. He met his impeachment now with considerable confidence.

* Defence of Plancius, c. 26, 27.

The gains of his first year of office were sufficient, he said, for himself; the second had been for his friends; the third produced more than enough to bribe a jury.

The trials at Rome took place in the Forum—the open space, of nearly five acres, lying between the Capitoline and Palatine hills. It was the city market-place, but it was also the place where the population assembled for any public meeting, political or other—where the idle citizen strolled to meet his friends and hear the gossip of the day, and where the man of business made his appointments. Courts for the administration of justice—magnificent halls, called *basilicæ*—had by this time been erected on the north and south sides, and in these the ordinary trials took place; but for state trials the open Forum was itself the court. One end of the wide area was raised on a somewhat higher level—a kind of dais on a large scale—and was separated from the rest by the Rostra, a sort of stage from which the orators spoke. It was here that the trials were held. A temporary tribunal for the presiding officer, with accommodation for counsel, witnesses, and jury, was erected in the open air; and the scene may perhaps best be pictured by imagining the principal square in some large town fitted up with open hustings on a large scale for an old-fashioned county election, by no means omitting the intense popular excitement and mob violence appropriate to such occasions. Temples of the gods and other public buildings overlooked the area, and the steps of these, on any occasion of great

excitement, would be crowded by those who were anxious to see at least, if they could not hear.

Verres, as a state criminal, would be tried before a special commission, and by a jury composed at this time entirely from the senatorial order, chosen by lot (with a limited right of challenge reserved to both parties) from a panel made out every year by the prætor. This magistrate, who was a kind of minister of justice, usually presided on such occasions, occupying the curule chair, which was one of the well-known privileges of high office at Rome. But his office was rather that of the modern chairman who keeps order at a public meeting than that of a judge. Judge, in our sense of the word, there was none; the jury were the judges both of law and fact. They were, in short, the recognised assessors of the prætor, in whose hands the administration of justice was supposed to lie. The law, too, was of a highly flexible character, and the appeals of the advocates were rather to the passions and feelings of the jurors than to the legal points of the case. Cicero himself attached comparatively little weight to this branch of his profession;—"Busy as I am," he says in one of his speeches, "I could make myself lawyer enough in three days." The jurors gave each their vote by ballot,—'guilty,' 'not guilty,' or (as in the Scotch courts) 'not proven,'—and the majority carried the verdict.

But such trials as that of Verres were much more like an impeachment before the House of Commons than a calm judicial inquiry. The men who would have to try a defendant of his class would be, in very

few cases, honest and impartial weighers of the evidence. Their large number (varying from fifty to seventy) weakened the sense of individual responsibility, and laid them more open to the appeal of the advocates to their political passions. Most of them would come into court prejudiced in some degree by the interests of party ; many would be hot partisans. Cicero, in his treatise on 'Oratory,' explains clearly for the pleader's guidance the nature of the tribunals to which he had to appeal. "Men are influenced in their verdicts much more by prejudice or favour, or greed of gain, or anger, or indignation, or pleasure, or hope or fear, or by misapprehension, or by some excitement of their feelings, than either by the facts of the case, or by established precedents, or by any rules or principles whatever either of law or equity."

Verres was supported by some of the most powerful families at Rome. Peculation on the part of governors of provinces had become almost a recognised principle: many of those who held offices of state either had done, or were waiting their turn to do, much the same as the present defendant; and every effort had been made by his friends either to put off the trial indefinitely, or to turn it into a sham by procuring the appointment of a private friend and creature of his own as public prosecutor. On the other hand, the Sicilian families, whom he had wronged and outraged, had their share of influence also at Rome, and there was a growing impatience of the insolence and rapacity of the old governing houses, of whose worst qualities the ex-governor of Sicily was a fair type. There were many reasons which would

lead Cicero to take up such a cause energetically. It was a great opening for him in what we may call his profession : his former connection with the government of Sicily gave him a personal interest in the cause of the province ; and, above all, the prosecution of a state offender of such importance was a lift at once into the foremost ranks of political life. He spared no pains to get up his case thoroughly. He went all over the island collecting evidence ; and his old popularity there did him good service in the work.

There was, indeed, evidence enough against the late governor. The reckless gratification of his avarice and his passions had seldom satisfied him, without the addition of some bitter insult to the sufferers. But there was even a more atrocious feature in the case, of which Cicero did not fail to make good use in his appeal to a Roman jury. Many of the unhappy victims had the Roman franchise. The torture of an unfortunate Sicilian might be turned into a jest by a clever advocate for the defence, and regarded by a philosophic jury with less than the cold compassion with which we regard the sufferings of the lower animals ; but “to scourge a man that was a Roman and uncondemned,” even in the far-off province of Judea, was a thought which, a century later, made the officers of the great Empire, at its pitch of power, tremble before a wandering teacher who bore the despised name of Christian. No one can possibly tell the tale so well as Cicero himself ; and the passage from his speech for the prosecution is an admirable specimen both of his power of pathetic narrative and scathing denunciation.

“How shall I speak of Publius Gavius, a citizen of Consa? With what powers of voice, with what force of language, with what sufficient indignation of soul, can I tell the tale? Indignation, at least, will not fail me: the more must I strive that in this my pleading the other requisites may be made to meet the gravity of the subject, the intensity of my feeling. For the accusation is such that, when it was first laid before me, I did not think to make use of it; though I knew it to be perfectly true, I did not think it would be credible.—How shall I now proceed?—when I have already been speaking for so many hours on one subject—his atrocious cruelty; when I have exhausted upon other points well-nigh all the powers of language such as alone is suited to that man’s crimes;—when I have taken no precaution to secure your attention by any variety in my charges against him,—in what fashion can I now speak on a charge of this importance? I think there is one way—one course, and only one, left for me to take. I will place the facts before you; and they have in themselves such weight, that no eloquence—I will not say of mine, for I have none—but of any man’s, is needed to excite your feelings.

“This Gavius of Consa, of whom I speak, had been among the crowds of Roman citizens who had been thrown into prison under that man. Somehow he had made his escape out of the Quarries,* and had got to

* This was one of the state prisons at Syracuse, so called, said to have been constructed by the tyrant Dionysius. They were the quarries from which the stone was dug for building the city, and had been converted to their present purpose. . Cicero,

Messana ; and when he saw Italy and the towers of Rhegium now so close to him, and out of the horror and shadow of death felt himself breathe with a new life as he scented once more the fresh air of liberty and the laws, he began to talk at Messana, and to complain that he, a Roman citizen, had been put in irons—that he was going straight to Rome—that he would be ready there for Verres on his arrival.

“The wretched man little knew that he might as well have talked in this fashion in the governor’s palace before his very face, as at Messana. For, as I told you before, this city he had selected for himself as the accomplice in his crimes, the receiver of his stolen goods, the confidant of all his wickedness. So Gavius is brought at once before the city magistrates ; and, as it so chanced, on that very day Verres himself came to Messana. The case is reported to him ; that there is a certain Roman citizen who complained of having been put into the Quarries at Syracuse ; that as he was just going on board ship, and was uttering threats—really too atrocious—against Verres, they had detained him, and kept him in custody, that the governor himself might decide about him as should seem to him good. Verres thanks the gentlemen, and extols their goodwill and zeal for his interests. He himself, burning with rage and malice, comes down to the court. His eyes who no doubt had seen the one in question, describes it as sunk to an immense depth in the solid rock. There was no roof ; and the unhappy prisoners were exposed there “to the sun by day, and to the rain and frosts by night.” In these places the survivors of the unfortunate Athenian expedition against Syracuse were confined, and died in great numbers.

flashed fire ; cruelty was written on every line of his face. All present watched anxiously to see to what lengths he meant to go, or what steps he would take ; when suddenly he ordered the prisoner to be dragged forth, and to be stripped and bound in the open forum, and the rods to be got ready at once. The unhappy man cried out that he was a Roman citizen—that he had the municipal franchise of Consa—that he had served in a campaign with Lucius Pretius, a distinguished Roman knight, now engaged in business at Panormus, from whom Verres might ascertain the truth of his statement. Then that man replies that he has discovered that he, Gavius, has been sent into Sicily as a spy by the ringleaders of the runaway slaves ; of which charge there was neither witness nor trace of any kind, or even suspicion in any man's mind. Then he ordered the man to be scourged severely all over his body. Yes—a Roman citizen was cut to pieces with rods in the open forum at Messana, gentlemen ; and as the punishment went on, no word, no groan of the wretched man, in all his anguish, was heard amid the sound of the lashes, but this cry,—‘ I am a Roman citizen ! ’ By such protest of citizenship he thought he could at least save himself from anything like blows—could escape the indignity of personal torture. But not only did he fail in thus deprecating the insult of the lash, but when he redoubled his entreaties and his appeal to the name of Rome, a cross—yes, I say, a cross—was ordered for that most unfortunate and ill-fated man, who had never yet beheld such an abuse of a governor's power.

“O name of liberty, sweet to our ears! O rights of citizenship, in which we glory! O laws of Porcius and Sempronius! O privilege of the tribune, long and sorely regretted, and at last restored to the people of Rome! Has it all come to this, that a Roman citizen in a province of the Roman people—in a federal town—is to be bound and beaten with rods in the forum by a man who only holds those rods and axes—those awful emblems—by grace of that same people of Rome? What shall I say of the fact that fire, and red-hot plates, and other tortures were applied? Even if his agonised entreaties and pitiable cries did not check you, were you not moved by the tears and groans which burst from the Roman citizens who were present at the scene? Did you dare to drag to the cross any man who claimed to be a citizen of Rome?—I did not intend, gentlemen, in my former pleading, to press this case so strongly—I did not indeed; for you saw yourselves how the public feeling was already embittered against the defendant by indignation, and hate, and dread of a common peril.”

He then proceeds to prove by witnesses the facts of the case and the falsehood of the charge against Gavius of having been a spy. “However,” he goes on to say, addressing himself now to Verres, “we will grant, if you please, that your suspicions on this point, if false, were honestly entertained.”

“You did not know who the man was; you suspected him of being a spy. I do not ask the grounds of your suspicion. I impeach you on your own evidence. He said he was a Roman citizen.

Had you yourself, Verres, been seized and led out to execution, in Persia, say, or in the farthest Indies, what other cry or protest could you raise but that you were a Roman citizen? And if you, a stranger there among strangers, in the hands of barbarians, amongst men who dwell in the farthest and remotest regions of the earth, would have found protection in the name of your city, known and renowned in every nation under heaven, could the victim whom you were dragging to the cross, be he who he might—and you did not know who he was—when he declared he was a citizen of Rome, could he obtain from you, a Roman magistrate, by the mere mention and claim of citizenship, not only no reprieve, but not even a brief respite from death?

“Men of neither rank nor wealth, of humble birth and station, sail the seas; they touch at some spot they never saw before, where they are neither personally known to those whom they visit, nor can always find any to vouch for their nationality. But in this single fact of their citizenship they feel they shall be safe, not only with our own governors, who are held in check by the terror of the laws and of public opinion—not only among those who share that citizenship of Rome, and who are united with them by community of language, of laws, and of many things besides—but go where they may, this, they think, will be their safeguard. Take away this confidence, destroy this safeguard for our Roman citizens—once establish the principle that there is no protection in the words, ‘I am a citizen of Rome’—that prætor or other magistrate may

with impunity sentence to what punishment he will a man who says he is a Roman citizen, merely because somebody does not know it for a fact ; and at once, by admitting such a defence, you are shutting up against our Roman citizens all our provinces, all foreign states, despotic or independent—all the whole world, in short, which has ever lain open to our national enterprise beyond all."

He turns again to Verres.

"But why talk of Gavius? as though it were Gavius on whom you were wreaking a private vengeance, instead of rather waging war against the very name and rights of Roman citizenship. You showed yourself an enemy, I say, not to the individual man, but to the common cause of liberty. For what meant it that, when the authorities of Messana, according to their usual custom, would have erected the cross behind their city on the Pompeian road, you ordered it to be set up on the side that looked toward the Strait? Nay, and added this—which you cannot deny, which you said openly in the hearing of all—that you chose that spot for this reason, that as he had called himself a Roman citizen, he might be able, from his cross of punishment, to see in the distance his country and his home ! And so, gentlemen, that cross was the only one, since Messana was a city, that was ever erected on that spot. A point which commanded a view of Italy was chosen by the defendant for the express reason that the dying sufferer, in his last agony and torment, might see how the rights of the slave and the freeman were separated by that

narrow streak of sea ; that Italy might look upon a son of hers suffering the capital penalty reserved for slaves alone.

“ It is a crime to put a citizen of Rome in bonds ; it is an atrocity to scourge him ; to put him to death is well-nigh parricide ; what shall I say it is to crucify him ?—Language has no word by which I may designate such an enormity. Yet with all this yon man was not content. ‘ Let him look,’ said he, ‘ towards his country ; let him die in full sight of freedom and the laws.’ It was not Gavius ; it was not a single victim, unknown to fame, a mere individual Roman citizen ; it was the common cause of liberty, the common rights of citizenship, which you there outraged and put to a shameful death.”

But in order to judge of the thrilling effect of such passages upon a Roman jury, they must be read in the grand periods of the oration itself, to which no translation into a language so different in idiom and rhythm as English is from Latin can possibly do justice. The fruitless appeal made by the unhappy citizen to the outraged majesty of Rome, and the indignant demand for vengeance which the great orator founds upon it—proclaiming the recognised principle that, in every quarter of the world, the humblest wanderer who could say he was a Roman citizen should find protection in the name—will be always remembered as having supplied Lord Palmerston with one of his most telling illustrations. But this great speech of Cicero’s—perhaps the most magnificent piece of declamation in any language—though written and preserved to us,

was never spoken. The whole of the pleadings in the case, which extend to some length, were composed for the occasion, no doubt, in substance, and we have to thank Cicero for publishing them afterwards in full. But Verres only waited to hear the brief opening speech of his prosecutor; he did not dare to challenge a verdict, but allowing judgment to go by default, withdrew to Marseilles soon after the trial opened. He lived there, undisturbed in the enjoyment of his plunder, long enough to see the fall and assassination of his great accuser, but only (as it is said) to share his fate soon afterwards as one of the victims of Antony's proscription. Of his guilt there can be no question; his fear to face a court in which he had many friends is sufficient presumptive evidence of it; but we must hesitate in assuming the deepness of its dye from the terrible invectives of Cicero. No sensible person will form an opinion upon the real merits of a case, even in an English court of justice now, entirely from the speech of the counsel for the prosecution. And if we were to go back a century or two, to the state trials of those days, we know that to form our estimate of a prisoner's guilt from such data only would be doing him a gross injustice. We have only to remember the exclamation of Warren Hastings himself, whose trial, as has been said, has so many points of resemblance with that of Verres, when Burke sat down after the torrent of eloquence which he had hurled against the accused in his opening speech for the prosecution;—"I thought myself for the moment," said Hastings, "the guiltiest man in England."

The result of this trial was to raise Cicero at once to the leadership—if so modern an expression may be used—of the Roman bar. Up to this time the position had been held by Hortensius, the counsel for Verres, whom Cicero himself calls “the king of the courts.” He was eight years the senior of Cicero in age, and many more professionally, for he is said to have made his first public speech at nineteen. He had the advantage of the most extraordinary memory, a musical voice, and a rich flow of language: but Cicero more than implies that he was not above bribing a jury. It was not more disgraceful in those days than bribing a voter in our own. The two men were very unlike in one respect; Hortensius was a fop and an exquisite (he is said to have brought an action against a colleague for disarranging the folds of his gown), while Cicero’s vanity was quite of another kind. After Verres’s trial, the two advocates were frequently engaged together in the same cause and on the same side: but Hortensius seems quietly to have abdicated his forensic sovereignty before the rising fame of his younger rival. They became, ostensibly at least, personal friends. What jealousy there was between them, strange to say, seems always to have been on the side of Cicero, who could not be convinced of the friendly feeling which, on Hortensius’s part, there seems no reason to doubt. After his rival’s death, however, Cicero did full justice to his merits and his eloquence, and even inscribed to his memory a treatise on ‘Glory,’ which has been lost.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONSULSHIP AND CATILINE.

THERE was no check as yet in Cicero's career. It had been a steady course of fame and success, honestly earned and well deserved ; and it was soon to culminate in that great civil triumph which earned for him the proud title of *Pater Patriæ*—the Father of his Country. It was a phrase which the orator himself had invented ; and it is possible that, with all his natural self-complacency, he might have felt a little uncomfortable under the compliment, when he remembered on whom he had originally bestowed it—upon that Caius Marius, whose death in his bed at a good old age, after being seven times consul, he afterwards uses as an argument, in the mouth of one of his imaginary disputants, against the existence of an overruling Providence. In the prime of his manhood he reached the great object of a Roman's ambition—he became virtually Prime Minister of the republic : for he was elected, by acclamation rather than by vote, the first of the two consuls for the year, and his colleague, Caius Antonius (who had beaten the third candidate, the notorious

Catiline, by a few votes only) was a man who valued his office chiefly for its opportunities of peculation, and whom Cicero knew how to manage. It is true that this high dignity—so jealous were the old republican principles of individual power—would last only for a year ; but that year was to be a most eventful one, both for Cicero and for Rome. The terrible days of Marius and Sylla had passed, only to leave behind a taste for blood and licence amongst the corrupt aristocracy and turbulent commons. There were men amongst the younger nobles quite ready to risk their lives in the struggle for absolute power ; and the mob was ready to follow whatever leader was bold enough to bid highest for their support.

It is impossible here to do much more than glance at the well-known story of Catiline's conspiracy. It was the attempt of an able and desperate man to make himself and his partisans masters of Rome by a bloody revolution. Catiline was a member of a noble but impoverished family, who had borne arms under Sylla, and had served an early apprenticeship in bloodshed under that unscrupulous leader. Cicero has described his character in terms which probably are not unfair, because the portrait was drawn by him, in the course of his defence of a young friend who had been too much connected with Catiline, for the distinct purpose of showing the popular qualities which had dazzled and attracted so many of the youth of Rome.

“He had about him very many of, I can hardly say the visible tokens, but the adumbrations of the highest qualities. There was in his character that

which tempted him to indulge the worst passions, but also that which spurred him to energy and hard work. Licentious appetites burnt fiercely within him, but there was also a strong love of active military service. I believe that there never lived on earth such a monster of inconsistency,—such a compound of opposite tastes and passions brought into conflict with each other. Who at one time was a greater favourite with our most illustrious men? Who was a closer intimate with our very basest? Who could be more greedy of money than he was? Who could lavish it more profusely? There were these marvellous qualities in the man,—he made friends so universally, he retained them by his obliging ways, he was ready to share what he had with them all, to help them at their need with his money, his influence, his personal exertions—not stopping short of the most audacious crime, if there was need of it. He could change his very nature, and rule himself by circumstances, and turn and bend in any direction. He lived soberly with the serious, he was a boon companion with the gay; grave with the elders, merry with the young; reckless among the desperate, profligate with the depraved. With a nature so complex and many-sided, he not only collected round him wicked and desperate characters from all quarters of the world, but he also attracted many brave and good men by his simulation of virtue. It would have been impossible for him to have organised that atrocious attack upon the Commonwealth, unless that fierce outgrowth of depraved passions had rested on some under-stratum of agreeable qualities and powers of endurance."

Born in the same year with Cicero, his unsuccessful rival for the consulship, and hating him with the implacable hatred with which a bad, ambitious, and able man hates an opponent who is his superior in ability and popularity as well as character, Catiline seems to have felt, as his revolutionary plot ripened, that between the new consul and himself the fates of Rome must choose. He had gathered round him a band of profligate young nobles, deep in debt like himself, and of needy and unscrupulous adventurers of all classes. He had partisans who were collecting and drilling troops for him in several parts of Italy. The programme was assassination, abolition of debts, confiscation of property : so little of novelty is there in revolutionary principles. The first plan had been to murder the consuls of the year before, and seize the government. It had failed through his own impatience. He now hired assassins against Cicero, choosing the opportunity of the election of the incoming consuls, which always took place some time before their entrance on office. But the plot was discovered, and the election was put off. When it did take place, Cicero appeared in the meeting, wearing somewhat ostentatiously a corslet of bright steel, to show that he knew his danger ; and Catiline's partisans found the place of meeting already occupied by a strong force of the younger citizens of the middle class, who had armed themselves for the consul's protection. The election passed off quietly, and Catiline was again rejected. A second time he tried assassination, and it failed—so watchful and well informed was the intended victim.

And now Cicero, perhaps, was roused to a consciousness that one or other must fall ; for in the unusually determined measures which he took in the suppression of the conspiracy, the mixture of personal alarm with patriotic indignation is very perceptible. By a fortunate chance, the whole plan of the conspirators was betrayed. Rebel camps had been formed not only in Italy, but in Spain and Mauritania : Rome was to be set on fire, the slaves to be armed, criminals let loose, the friends of order to be put out of the way. The consul called a meeting of the senate in the temple of Jupiter Stator, a strong position on the Palatine Hill, and denounced the plot in all its details, naming even the very day fixed for the outbreak. The arch-conspirator had the audacity to be present, and Cicero addressed him personally in the eloquent invective which has come to us as his "First Oration against Catiline." His object was to drive his enemy from the city to the camp of his partisans, and thus to bring matters at once to a crisis for which he now felt himself prepared. This daily state of public insecurity and personal danger had lasted too long, he said :

"Therefore, let these conspirators at once take their side ; let them separate themselves from honest citizens, and gather themselves together somewhere else ; let them put a wall between us, as I have often said. Let us have them no longer thus plotting the assassination of a consul in his own house, overawing our courts of justice with armed bands, besieging the senate-house with drawn swords, collecting their incendiary stores to burn our city. Let us at last be able to read plainly

in every Roman's face whether he be loyal to his country or no. I may promise you this, gentlemen of the Senate—there shall be no lack of diligence on the part of your consuls ; there will be, I trust, no lack of dignity and firmness on your own, of spirit amongst the Roman knights, of unanimity amongst all honest men, but that when Catiline has once gone from us, everything will be not only discovered and brought into the light of day, but also crushed,—ay, and punished. Under such auspices, I bid you, Catiline, go forth to wage your impious and unhallowed war,—go, to the salvation of the state, to your own overthrow and destruction, to the ruin of all who have joined you in your great wickedness and treason. And thou, great Jupiter, whose worship Romulus founded here coeval with our city ;—whom we call truly the ‘Stay’ * of our capital and our empire ;—thou wilt protect thine own altars and the temples of thy kindred gods, the walls and roof-trees of our homes, the lives and fortunes of our citizens, from yon man and his accomplices. These enemies of all good men, invaders of their country, plunderers of Italy, linked together in a mutual bond of crime and an alliance of villany, thou wilt surely visit with an everlasting punishment, living and dead !”

Catiline's courage did not fail him. He had been sitting alone—for all the other senators had shrunk away from the bench of which he had taken possession. He rose, and in reply to Cicero, in a forced tone of humility protested his innocence. He tried also another point. Was he,—a man of ancient and noble

* ‘Stator.’

family,—to be hastily condemned by his fellow-nobles on the word of this ‘foreigner,’ as he contemptuously called Cicero—this *parvenu* from Arpinum? But the appeal failed; his voice was drowned in the cries of ‘traitor’ which arose on all sides, and with threats and curses, vowing that since he was driven to desperation he would involve all Rome in his ruin, he rushed out of the Senate-house. At dead of night he left the city, and joined the insurgent camp at Fæsulæ.

When the thunders of Cicero’s eloquence had driven Catiline from the Senate-house, and forced him to join his fellow-traitors, and so put himself in the position of levying open war against the state, it remained to deal with those influential conspirators who had been detected and seized within the city walls. In three subsequent speeches in the Senate he justified the course he had taken in allowing Catiline to escape, exposed further particulars of the conspiracy, and urged the adoption of strong measures to crush it out within the city. Even now, not all Cicero’s eloquence, nor all the efforts of our imagination to realise, as men realised it then, the imminence of the public danger, can reconcile the summary process adopted by the consul with our English notions of calm and deliberate justice. Of the guilt of the men there was no doubt; most of them even admitted it. But there was no formal trial; and a few hours after a vote of death had been passed upon them in a hesitating Senate, Lentulus and Cethegus, two members of that august body, with three of their companions in guilt, were brought from their separate

places of confinement, with some degree of secrecy (as appears from different writers), carried down into the gloomy prison-vaults of the Tullianum,* and there quietly strangled, by the sole authority of the consul. Unquestionably they deserved death, if ever political criminals deserved it: the lives and liberties of good citizens were in danger; it was necessary to strike deep and strike swiftly at a conspiracy which extended no man knew how widely, and in which men like Julius Cæsar and Crassus were strongly suspected of being engaged. The consuls had been armed with extra-constitutional powers, conveyed by special resolution of the Senate in the comprehensive formula that they "were to look to it that the state suffered no damage." Still, without going so far as to call this unexampled proceeding, as the German critic Mommсен does, "an act of the most brutal tyranny," it is easy to understand how Mr Forsyth, bringing a calm and dispassionate legal judgment to bear upon the case, finds it impossible to reconcile it with our ideas of dignified and even-handed justice.† It was the hasty instinct of self-preservation, the act of a weak government uncertain of its very friends, under the influence of terror—a terror for which, no doubt, there were abundant grounds. When Cicero stood on the prison steps, where he had waited to receive the report

* A state dungeon, said to have been built in the reign of Servius Tullius. It was twelve feet under ground. Executions often took place there, and the bodies of the criminals were afterwards thrown down the Gemonian steps (which were close at hand) into the Forum, for the people to see.

† Life of Cicero, p. 119.

of those who were making sure work with the prisoners within, and announced their fate to the assembled crowd below in the single word "*Vixerunt*" (a euphemism which we can only weakly translate into "They have lived their life"), no doubt he felt that he and the republic held theirs from that moment by a firmer tenure; no doubt very many of those who heard him felt that they could breathe again, now that the grasp of Catiline's assassins was, for the moment at all events, off their throats; and the crowd who followed the consul home were sincere enough when they hailed such a vigorous avenger as the 'Father of his Country.' But none the less it was that which politicians have called worse than a crime—it was a political blunder; and Cicero came to find it so in after years; though—partly from his immense self-appreciation, and partly from an honest determination to stand by his act and deed in all its consequences—he never suffered the shadow of such a confession to appear in his most intimate correspondence. He claimed for himself ever afterwards the sole glory of having saved the state by such prompt and decided action; and in this he was fully borne out by the facts: justifiable or unjustifiable, the act was his; and there were burning hearts at Rome which dared not speak out against the popular consul, but set it down to his sole account against the day of retribution.

For the present, however, all went successfully. The boldness of the consul's measures cowed the disaffected, and confirmed the timid and wavering. His colleague Antonius—himself by no means to be de-

pended on at this crisis, having but lately formed a coalition with Catiline as against Cicero in the election for consuls—had, by judicious management, been got away from Rome to take the command against the rebel army in Etruria. He did not, indeed, engage in the campaign actively in person, having just now a fit of the gout, either real or pretended; but his lieutenant-general was an old soldier who cared chiefly for his duty, and Catiline's band—reckless and desperate men who had gathered to his camp from all motives and from all quarters—were at length brought to bay, and died fighting hard to the last. Scarcely a man of them, except the slaves and robbers who had swelled their ranks, either escaped or was made prisoner. Catiline's body—easily recognised by his remarkable height—was found, still breathing, lying far in advance of his followers, surrounded by the dead bodies of the Roman legionaries—for the loss on the side of the Republic had been very severe. The last that remained to him of the many noble qualities which had marked his earlier years was a desperate personal courage.

For the month that yet remained of his consulship, Cicero was the foremost man in Rome—and, as a consequence, in the whole world. Nobles and commons vied in doing honour to the saviour of the state. Catulus and Cato—men from whose lips words of honour came with a double weight—saluted him publicly by that memorable title of *Pater Patriæ*; and not only the capital, but most of the provincial towns of Italy, voted him some public testimony of his un-

rivalled services. No man had a more profound appreciation of those services than the great orator himself. It is possible that other men have felt quite as vain of their own exploits, and on far less grounds ; but surely no man ever paraded his self-complacency like Cicero. His vanity was indeed a thing to marvel at rather than to smile at, because it was the vanity of so able a man. Other great men have been either too really great to entertain the feeling, or have been wise enough to keep it to themselves. But to Cicero it must have been one of the enjoyments of his life. He harped upon his consulship in season and out of season, in his letters, in his judicial pleadings, in his public speeches (and we may be sure in his conversation), until one would think his friends must have hated the subject even more than his enemies. He wrote accounts of it in prose and verse, in Latin and Greek—and, no doubt, only limited them to those languages because they were the only ones he knew. The well-known line which provoked the ridicule of critics like Juvenal and Quintilian, because of the unlucky jingle peculiarly unpleasant to a Roman ear—

“ O fortunatam natam me consule Romam ! ”

expresses the sentiment which—rhyme or no rhyme, reason or no reason—he was continually repeating in some form or other to himself and to every one who would listen.

His consulship closed in glory ; but on his very last day of office there was a warning voice raised amidst the triumph, which might have opened his eyes—

perhaps it did—to the troubles which were to come. He stood up in the Rostra to make the usual address to the people on laying down his authority. Metellus Nepos had been newly elected one of the tribunes: it was his office to guard jealously all the rights and privileges of the Roman commons. Influenced, it is said, by Cæsar—possibly himself an undiscovered partisan of Catiline—he dealt a blow at the retiring consul under cover of a discharge of duty. As Cicero was about to speak, he interposed a tribune's 'veto'; no man should be heard, he said, who *had put Roman citizens to death without a trial*. There was consternation in the Forum. Cicero could not dispute what was a perfectly legal exercise of the tribune's power; only, in a few emphatic words which he seized the opportunity of adding to the usual formal oath on quitting office, he protested that his act had saved Rome. The people shouted in answer, "Thou hast said true!" and Cicero went home a private citizen, but with that hearty tribute from his grateful countrymen ringing pleasantly in his ears. But the bitter words of Metellus were yet to be echoed by his enemies again and again, until that fickle popular voice took them up, and howled them after the once popular consul.

Let us follow him for a while into private life; a pleasanter companionship for us, we confess, than the unstable glories of the political arena at Rome. In his family and social relations, the great orator wins from us an amount of personal interest and sympathy which he fails sometimes to command in his career as a statesman. At forty-five years of age he has

become a very wealthy man—has bought for something like £30,000 a noble mansion on the Palatine Hill; and besides the old-fashioned family seat near Arpinum—now become his own by his father's death—he has built, or enlarged, or bought as they stood, villas at Antium, at Formiæ, at Pompeii, at Cumæ, at Puteoli, and at half-a-dozen other places, besides the one favourite spot of all, which was to him almost what Abbotsford was to Scott, the home which it was the delight of his life to embellish—his country-house among the pleasant hills of Tusculum.* It had once belonged to Sulla, and was about twelve miles from Rome. In that beloved building and its arrangements he indulged, as an ample purse allowed him, not only a highly-cultivated taste, but in some respects almost a whimsical fancy. “A mere cottage,” he himself terms it in one place; but this was when he was deprecating accusations of extravagance which were brought against him, and we all understand something of the pride which in such matters “apes humility.” He would have it on the plan of the Academia at Athens, with its *palæstra* and open colonnade, where, as he tells us, he could walk and discuss politics or philosophy with his friends. Greek taste and design were as fashionable among the Romans of that day as the Louis Quatorze style was with our grandfathers. But its grand feature was a library, and its most valued furniture was books. Without books, he said, a house was but a body without a soul. He entertained for these

* Near the modern town of Frascati. But there is no certainty as to the site of Cicero's villa.

treasures not only the calm love of a reader, but the passion of a bibliophile ; he was particular about his bindings, and admired the gay colours of the covers in which the precious manuscripts were kept as well as the more intellectual beauties within. He had clever Greek slaves employed from time to time in making copies of all such works as were not to be readily purchased. He could walk across, too, as he tells us, to his neighbour's, the young Lucullus, a kind of ward of his, and borrow from the library of that splendid mansion any book he wanted. His friend Atticus collected for him everywhere—manuscripts, paintings, statuary ; though for sculpture he professes not to care much, except for such subjects as might form appropriate decorations for his *palæstra* and his library. Very pleasant must have been the days spent together by the two friends—so alike in their private tastes and habits, so far apart in their chosen course of life—when they met there in the brief holidays which Cicero stole from the law-courts and the Forum, and sauntered in the shady walks, or lounged in the cool library, in that home of lettered ease, where the busy lawyer and politician declared that he forgot for a while all the toils and vexations of public life.

He had his little annoyances, however, even in these happy hours of retirement. Morning calls were an infliction to which a country gentleman was liable in ancient Italy as in modern England. A man like Cicero was very good company, and somewhat of a lion besides ; and country neighbours, wherever he set up his rest, insisted on bestowing their tediousness on

him. His villa at Formiæ, his favourite residence next to Tusculum, was, he protested, more like a public hall. Most of his visitors, indeed, had the consideration not to trouble him after ten or eleven in the forenoon (fashionable calls in those days began uncomfortably early); but there were one or two, especially his next-door neighbour, Arrius, and a friend's friend, named Sebosus, who were in and out at all hours: the former had an unfortunate taste for philosophical discussion, and was postponing his return to Rome (he was good enough to say) from day to day in order to enjoy these long mornings in Cicero's conversation. Such are the doleful complaints in two or three of the letters to Atticus; but, like all such complaints, they were probably only half in earnest: popularity, even at a watering-place, was not very unpleasant, and the writer doubtless knew how to practise the social philosophy which he recommends to others, and took his place cheerfully and pleasantly in the society which he found about him—not despising his honest neighbours because they had not all adorned a consulship or saved a state.

There were times when Cicero fancied that this rural life, with all its refinements of wealth and taste and literary leisure, was better worth living than the public life of the capital. His friends and his books, he said, were the company most congenial to him; “politics might go to the dogs;” to count the waves as they rolled on the beach was happiness; he “had rather be mayor of Antium than consul at Rome”; “rather sit in his own library with Atticus in their

favourite seat under the bust of Aristotle than in the curule chair." It is true that these longings for retirement usually followed some political defeat or mortification ; that his natural sphere, the only life in which he could be really happy, was in the keen excitement of party warfare—the glorious battle-field of the Senate and the Forum. The true key-note of his mind is to be found in these words to his friend Cœlius : "Cling to the city, my friend, and live in her light : all employment abroad, as I have felt from my earliest manhood, is obscure and petty for those who have abilities to make them famous at Rome." Yet the other strain had nothing in it of affectation or hypocrisy : it was the schoolboy escaped from work, thoroughly enjoying his holiday, and fancying that nothing would be so delightful as to have holidays always. In this, again, there was a similarity between Cicero's taste and that of Horace. The poet loved his Sabine farm and all its rural delights—after his fashion ; and perhaps thought honestly that he loved it more than he really did. Above all, he loved to write about it. With that fancy, half-real, perhaps, and half-affected, for pastoral simplicity, which has always marked a state of over-luxurious civilisation, he protests to himself that there is nothing like the country. But perhaps Horace discharges a sly jest at himself, in a sort of aside to his readers, in the person of Alphius, the rich city money-lender, who is made to utter that pretty apostrophe to rural happiness :—

“ Happy the man, in busy schemes unskilled,
 Who, living simply, like our sires of old,
 Tills the few acres which his father tilled,
 Vexed by no thoughts of usury or gold.”

Martin's ‘Horace.’

And who, after thus expatiating for some stanzas on the charms of the country, calls in all his money one week in order to settle there, and puts it all out again (no doubt at higher interest) the week after. “*O rus, quando te aspiciam!*” has been the cry of public men before and since Cicero's day, to whom, as to the great Roman, banishment from political life, and condemnation to perpetual leisure, would have been a sentence that would have crushed their very souls.

He was very happy at this time in his family. His wife and he loved one another with an honest affection; anything more would have been out of the natural course of things in Roman society at any date, and even so much as this was become a notable exception in these later days. It is paying a high honour to the character of Cicero and his household—and from all evidence that has come down to us it may be paid with truth—that even in those evil times it might have presented the original of what Virgil drew as almost a fancy picture, or one to be realised only in some happy retirement into which the civilised vices of the capital had never penetrated—

“ Where loving children climb to reach a kiss—
 A home of chaste delights and wedded bliss.” *

* “*Intertia dulces pendent circum oscula nati ;
 Casta pudicitiam servat domus.*”

—Georg. ii. 524.

His little daughter, Tullia, or Tulliola, which was her pet name (the Roman diminutives being formed somewhat more elegantly than ours, by adding a syllable instead of cutting short), was the delight of his heart ; in his earlier letters to Atticus he is constantly making some affectionate mention of her—sending her love, or some playful message which his friend would understand. She had been happily married (though she was then but thirteen at the most) the year before his consulship ; but the affectionate intercourse between father and daughter was never interrupted until her early death. His only son, Marcus, born after a considerable interval, who succeeded to Tullia's place as a household pet, is made also occasionally to send some childish word of remembrance to his father's old friend : " Cicero the Little sends his compliments to Titus the Athenian "—" Cicero the Philosopher salutes Titus the Politician."* These messages are written in Greek at the end of the letters. Abeken thinks that in the originals they might have been added in the little Cicero's own hand, " to show that he had begun Greek ; " " a conjecture," says Mr Merivale, " too pleasant not to be readily admitted." The boy gave his father some trouble in after life. He served with some credit as an officer of cavalry under Pompey in Greece, or at least got into no trouble there. Some years after, he wished to take service in Spain, under Cæsar, against the sons of Pompey ; but the father did not approve of this change of side. He persuaded him to go to

* See ' Letters to Atticus,' ii. 9, 12 ; Merivale's translation of Abeken's ' Cicero in Seinen Briefen,' p. 114.

Athens to study instead, allowing him what both Atticus and himself thought a very liberal income—not sufficient, however, for him to keep a horse, which Cicero held to be an unnecessary luxury. Probably the young cavalry officer might not have been of the same opinion; at any rate, he got into more trouble among the philosophers than he did in the army. He spent a great deal more than his allowance, and one of the professors, whose lectures he attended, had the credit of helping him to spend it. The young man must have shared the kindly disposition of his father. He wrote a confidential letter to Tiro, the old family servant, showing very good feeling, and promising reformation. It is doubtful how far the promise was kept. He rose, however, subsequently to place and power under Augustus, but died without issue; and, so far at least as history knows them, the line of the Ciceros was extinct. It had flashed into fame with the great orator, and died out with him.

All Cicero's biographers have found considerable difficulty in tracing, at all satisfactorily, the sources of the magnificent fortune which must have been required to keep up, and to embellish in accordance with so luxurious a taste, so many residences in all parts of the country. True, these expenses often led Cicero into debt and difficulties; but what he borrowed from his friends he seems always to have repaid, so that the money must have come in from some quarter or other. His patrimony at Arpinum would not appear to have been large; he got only some £3000 or £4000 dowry with Terentia; and we find no hint of his making

money by any commercial speculations, as some Roman gentlemen did. On the other hand, it is the barest justice to him to say that his hands were clean from those ill-gotten gains which made the fortunes of many of the wealthiest public men at Rome, who were criminals in only a less degree than Verres—peculation, extortion, and downright robbery in the unfortunate provinces which they were sent out to govern. Such opportunities lay as ready to his grasp as to other men's, but he steadily eschewed them. His declining the tempting prize of a provincial government, which was his right on the expiration of his prætorship, may fairly be attributed to his having in view the higher object of the consulship, to secure which, by an early and persistent canvass, he felt it necessary to remain in Rome. But he again waived the right when his consulship was over; and when, some years afterwards, he went unwillingly as proconsul to Cilicia, his administration there, as before in his lower office in Sicily, was marked by a probity and honesty quite exceptional in a Roman governor. His emoluments, confined strictly within the legal bounds, would be only moderate, and, whatever they were, came too late in his life to be any explanation of his earlier expenditure. He received many valuable legacies, at different times, from personal friends or grateful clients who died childless (be it remembered how the barrenness of the marriage union had become then, at Rome, as it is said to be in some countries now, the reproach of a sensual and effete aristocracy); he boasts himself, in one of his 'Philippics,' that he had received from this source

above £170,000. Mr Forsyth also notices the large presents that were made by foreign kings and states to conciliate the support and advocacy of the leading men at Rome—"we can hardly call them bribes, for in many cases the relation of patron and client was avowedly established between a foreign state and some influential Roman: and it became his duty, as of course it was his interest, to defend it in the Senate and before the people." In this way, he thinks, Cicero held "retainers" from Dyrrachium; and, he might have added, from Sicily. The great orator's own boast was, that he never took anything for his services as an advocate; and, indeed, such payments were forbidden by law.* But with all respect for Cicero's material honesty, one learns from his letters, unfortunately, not to put implicit confidence in him when he is in a boasting vein; and he might not look upon voluntary gifts, after a cause was decided, in the light of payment. Pætus, one of his clients, gave him a valuable library of books; and one cannot believe that this was a solitary instance of the quiet evasion of the Cincian law, or that there were not other transactions of the same nature which never found their way into any letter of Cicero's that was likely to come down to us.

* The principle passed, like so many others, from the old Roman law into our own, so that to this very day, a barrister's fees, being considered in the nature of an *honorarium*, or voluntary present made to him for his services, are not recoverable by law.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS EXILE AND RETURN.

WE must return to Rome. Cicero had never left it but for his short occasional holiday. Though no longer in office, the ex-consul was still one of the foremost public men, and his late dignity gave him important precedence in the Senate. He was soon to be brought into contact, and more or less into opposition, with the two great chiefs of parties in whose feuds he became at length so fatally involved. Pompey and Cæsar were both gradually becoming formidable, and both had ambitious plans of their own, totally inconsistent with any remnant of republican liberty—plans which Cicero more or less suspected, and of that suspicion they were probably both aware. Both, by their successful campaigns, had not only acquired fame and honours, but a far more dangerous influence—an influence which was to overwhelm all others hereafter—in the affection of their legions. Pompey was still absent in Spain, but soon to return from his long war against Mithridates, to enjoy the most splendid triumph ever seen at Rome, and to take the

lead of the oligarchical party just so long and so far as they would help him to the power he coveted. The enemies whom Cicero had made by his strong measures in the matter of the Catilinarian conspiracy now took advantage of Pompey's name and popularity to make an attack upon him. The tribune Metellus, constant to his old party watchword, moved in the Senate that the successful general, upon whom all expectations were centred, should be recalled to Rome with his army "to restore the violated constitution." All knew against whom the motion was aimed, and what the violation of the constitution meant; it was the putting citizens to death without a trial. The measure was not passed, though Cæsar, jealous of Cicero even more than of Pompey, lent himself to the attempt.

But the blow fell on Cicero at last from a very different quarter, and from the mere private grudge of a determined and unprincipled man. Publius Clodius, a young man of noble family, once a friend and supporter of Cicero against Catiline, but who had already made himself notorious for the most abandoned profligacy, was detected, in a woman's dress, at the celebration of the rites of the Bona Dea—a kind of religious freemasonry amongst the Roman ladies, the mysteries of which are very little known, and probably would in any case be best left without explanation. But for a man to have been present at them was a sacrilege hitherto unheard of, and which was held to lay the whole city under the just wrath of the offended goddess. The celebration had been held in the house of

Cæsar, as prætor, under the presidency of his wife Pompeia ; and it was said that the object of the young profligate was an intrigue with that lady. The circumstances are not favourable to the suspicion ; but Cæsar divorced her forthwith, with the often-quoted remark that “Cæsar’s wife must not be even suspected.” For this crime—unpardonable even in that corrupt society, when crimes of far deeper dye passed almost unproved—Clodius was, after some delay, brought to public trial. The defence set up was an *alibi*, and Cicero came forward as a witness to disprove it : he had met and spoken with Clodius in Rome that very evening. The evidence was clear enough, but the jury had been tampered with by Clodius and his friends ; liberal bribery, and other corrupting influences of even a more disgraceful kind, had been successfully brought to bear upon the majority of them, and he escaped conviction by a few votes. But he never forgave the part which Cicero had taken against him ; and from that time forth the latter found a new, unscrupulous, indefatigable enemy, of whose services his old opponents gladly availed themselves. Cicero himself for some time underrated this new danger. He lost no opportunity of taunting the unconvicted criminal in the bitterest terms in the Senate, and of exchanging with him—very much to the detriment of his own character and dignity, in our modern eyes—the coarsest jests when they met in the street. But the temptation to a jest, of whatever kind, was always irresistible to Cicero : it was a weakness for which he more than once paid dearly, for they were remembered against

him when he had forgotten them. Meanwhile Clodius—a sort of milder Catiline, not without many popular qualities—had got himself elected tribune; degrading himself formally from his own order of nobles for that purpose, since the tribune must be a man of the commons. The powers of the office were formidable for all purposes of obstruction and attack; Clodius had taken pains to ingratiate himself with all classes; and the consuls of the year were men of infamous character, for whom he had found a successful means of bribery by the promise of getting a special law passed to secure them the choice of the richest provincial governments—those coveted fields of plunder—of which they would otherwise have had to take their chance by lot. When all was ripe for his revenge, he brought before the people in full assembly the following bill of pains and penalties:—“Be it enacted, that whoever has put to death a Roman citizen uncondemned in due form of trial, shall be interdicted from fire and water.” Such was the legal form of words which implied banishment from Rome, outlawry, and social excommunication. Every man knew against whom the motion was levelled. It was carried—carried in spite of the indignation of all honest men in Rome, in spite of all Cicero’s humiliating efforts to obtain its rejection.

It was in vain that he put on mourning, as was the custom with those who were impeached of public crimes, and went about the streets thus silently imploring the pity of his fellow-citizens. In vain the whole of his own equestrian order, and in fact, as he declares, “all honest men” (it was his favourite term

for men of his own party), adopted the same dress to show their sympathy, and twenty thousand youths of good family—all in mourning—accompanied him through the city. The Senate even met and passed a resolution that their whole house should put on mourning too. But Gabinius, one of the consuls, at once called a public meeting, and warned the people not to make the mistake of thinking that the Senate was Rome.

In vain, also, was any personal appeal which Cicero could make to the only two men who might have had influence enough to sway the popular vote. He was ostensibly on good terms both with Pompey and Cæsar; in fact, he made it his policy so to be. He foresaw that on their future course would probably depend the fate of Rome, and he persuaded himself, perhaps honestly, that he could make them "better citizens." But he trusted neither; and both saw in him an obstacle to their own ambition. Cæsar now looked on coldly, not altogether sorry at the turn which affairs had taken, and faintly suggested that perhaps some "milder measure" might serve to meet the case. From Pompey Cicero had a right to look for some active support; indeed, such had been promised in case of need. He threw himself at his feet with prayers and tears, but even this last humiliation was in vain; and he anticipated the execution of that disgraceful edict by a voluntary withdrawal into exile. Piso, one of the consuls, had satirically suggested that thus he might "save Rome" a second time. His property was at once confiscated; his villas at Tusculum and at For-

miæ were plundered and laid waste, the consuls claiming the lion's share of the spoil; and Clodius, with his armed mob, set fire to the noble house on the Palatine, razed it to the ground, and erected on the site a temple to—*Liberty*!

Cicero had friends who strongly urged him to defy the edict; to remain at Rome, and call on all good citizens to arm in his defence. Modern historians very generally have assumed that, if he could have made up his mind to such a course, it would probably have been successful. He was to rely, we suppose, upon those "twenty thousand Roman youths"—rather a broken reed to trust to (remembering what those young galants were), with Cæsar against him, now at the head of his legions just outside the gates of Rome. He himself seriously contemplated suicide, and consulted his friends as to the propriety of such a step in the gravest and most business-like manner; though, with our modern notions on the subject, such a consultation has more of the ludicrous than the sublime. The sensible and practical Atticus convinced him that such a solution of his difficulties would be the greatest possible mistake—a mistake, moreover, which could never be rectified.

But almost any course would have become him better than that which he chose. Had he remained and faced Clodius and his bravos manfully—or had he turned his back upon Rome for ever, and shaken the dust off his feet against the ungrateful city, and become a noble pensioner upon Atticus at Buthrotum—he would have died a greater man. He wandered from place to place,

sheltered by friends whose unselfish loyalty marks their names with honour in that false and evil generation—Sica, and Flaccus, and Plancius—bemoaning himself like a woman,—“too blinded with tears to write,” “loathing the light of day.” Atticus thought he was going mad. It is not pleasant to dwell upon this miserable weakness of a great mind, which Cicero’s most eager eulogists admit, and which his detractors have not failed to make the most of. Nor is it easy to find excuse for him, but we will give him all the benefit of Mr Forsyth’s defence :—

“Seldom has misfortune so crushed a noble spirit, and never, perhaps, has the ‘bitter bread of banishment’ seemed more bitter to any one than to him. We must remember that the love of country was a passion with the ancients to a degree which it is now difficult to realise, and exile from it even for a time was felt to be an intolerable evil. The nearest approach to such a feeling was perhaps that of some favourite under an European monarchy, when, frowned upon by his sovereign, he was hurled from place and power, and banished from the court. The change to Cicero was indeed tremendous. Not only was he an exile from Rome, the scene of all his hopes, his glories, his triumphs, but he was under the ban of an outlaw. If found within a certain distance from the capital, he must die, and it was death to any one to give him food or shelter. His property was destroyed, his family was penniless, and the people whom he had so faithfully served were the authors of his ruin. All this may be urged in his behalf, but still it would have been only consistent with Roman fortitude to have shown that he possessed something of the spirit of the fallen archangel.” *

* Forsyth’s *Life of Cicero*, p. 190.

His exile lasted nearly a year and a half. Long before that time there had come a reaction in his favour. The new consuls were well disposed towards him; Clodius's insolence had already disgusted Pompey; Cæsar was absent with his legions in Gaul; his own friends, who had all along been active in his favour (though in his querulous mood he accused them of apathy) took advantage of the change, his generous rival Hortensius being amongst the most active; and all the frantic violence of Clodius and his party served only to delay for a while the return which they could not prevent. A motion for his recall was carried at last by an immense majority.

Cicero had one remarkable ally on that occasion. On one of the days when the Senate was known to be discussing his recall, the 'Andromache' of Ennius was being played in the theatre. The popular actor Æsop, whose name has come down to us in conjunction with that of Roscius, was playing the principal character. The great orator had been his pupil, and was evidently regarded by him as a personal friend. With all the force of his consummate art, he threw into Andromache's lament for her absent father his own feelings for Cicero. The words in the part were strikingly appropriate, and he did not hesitate to insert a phrase or two of his own when he came to speak of the man

"Who with a constant mind upheld the state,
Stood on the people's side in perilous times,
Ne'er recked of his own life, nor spared himself."

So significant and emphatic were his tone and ges-

ture as he addressed himself pointedly to his Roman audience, that they recalled him, and, amid a storm of plaudits, made him repeat the passage. He added to it the words—which were not set down for him—

“Best of all friends in direst strait of war !”

and the applause was redoubled. The actor drew courage from his success. When, as the play went on, he came to speak the words—

“And you—you let him live a banished man—

See him driven forth and hunted from your gates!”

he pointed to the nobles, knights, and commons, as they sat in their respective seats in the crowded rows before him, his own voice broke with grief, and the tears even more than the applause of the whole audience bore witness alike to their feelings towards the exile, and the dramatic power of the actor. “He pleaded my cause before the Roman people,” says Cicero (for it is he that tells the story), “with far more weight of eloquence than I could have pleaded for myself.”*

He had been visited with a remarkable dream, while staying with one of his friends in Italy, during the earlier days of his exile, which he now recalled with some interest. He tells us this story also himself, though he puts it into the mouth of another speaker, in his dialogue on “Divination.” If few were so fond of introducing personal anecdotes into every place where he could find room for them, fewer still could tell them so well.

* Defence of Sestius, c. 56, &c.

“I had lain awake a great part of the night, and at last towards dawn had begun to sleep soundly and heavily. I had given orders to my attendant that, in this case, though we had to start that very morning, strict silence should be kept, and that I was on no account to be disturbed; when about seven o’clock I awoke, and told him my dream. I thought I was wandering alone in some solitary place, when Caius Marius appeared to me, with his fasces bound with laurel, and asked why I was so sad? And when I answered that I had been driven from my country, he caught my hand, bade me be of good cheer, and put me under the guidance of his own lictor to lead me to his monument; there, he said, I should find my deliverance.”

So indeed it had turned out. The temple dedicated to Honour and Virtue, in which the Senate sat when they passed the first resolution for Cicero’s recall, was known as the “Monument of Marius.” There is no need to doubt the perfect good faith of the story which he tells, and it may be set down as one of the earliest authenticated instances of a dream coming true. But if dreams are fashioned out of our waking imaginations, it is easy to believe that the fortunes of his great townsman Marius, and the scenes in the Senate at Rome, were continually present to the exile’s thoughts.

His return was a triumphal progress. He landed at Brundisium on his daughter’s birthday. She had only just lost her husband Piso, who had gallantly maintained her father’s cause throughout, but she was the first to welcome him with tears of joy which overmastered her

sorrow. He was careful to lose no chance of making his return impressive. He took his way to Rome with the slow march of a conqueror. The journey which Horace made easily in twelve days, occupied Cicero twenty-four. But he chose not the shortest but the most public route, through Naples, Capua, Minturnæ, Terracina, and Aricia.

Let him tell the story of his own reception. If he tells it (as he does more than once) with an undisguised pride, it is a pride with which it is impossible not to sympathise. He boasted afterwards that he had been "carried back to Rome on the shoulders of Italy;" and Plutarch says it was a boast he had good right to make.

"Who does not know what my return home was like? How the people of Brundisium held out to me, as I might say, the right hand of welcome on behalf of all my native land? From thence to Rome my progress was like a march of all Italy. There was no district, no town, corporation, or colony, from which a public deputation was not sent to congratulate me. Why need I speak of my arrival at each place? how the people crowded the streets in the towns; how they flocked in from the country—fathers of families with wives and children? How can I describe those days, when all kept holiday, as though it were some high festival of the immortal gods, in joy for my safe return? That single day was to me like immortality; when I returned to my own city, when I saw the Senate and the population of all ranks come forth to greet me, when Rome herself looked as though she had wrenched

herself from her foundations to rush to embrace her preserver. For she received me in such sort, that not only all sexes, ages, and callings, men and women, of every rank and degree, but even the very walls, the houses, the temples, seemed to share the universal joy."

The Senate in a body came out to receive him on the Appian road; a gilded chariot waited for him at the city gates; the lower class of citizens crowded the steps of the temples to see him as he passed; and so he rode, escorted by troops of friends, more than a conqueror, to the Capitol.

His exultation was naturally as intense as his despair had been. He made two of his most florid speeches (if indeed they be his, which is doubtful), one in the Senate and another to the people assembled in the Forum, in which he congratulated himself on his return, and Rome on having regained her most illustrious citizen. It is a curious note of the temper and logical capacities of the mob, in all ages of the world alike, that within a few hours of their applauding to the echo this speech of Cicero's, Clodius succeeded in exciting them to a serious riot by appealing to the ruinous price of corn as one of the results of the exile's return.

For nearly four years more, though unable to shake Cicero's recovered position in the state—for he was now supported by Pompey—Clodius and his partisans, backed by a strong force of trained gladiators in their pay, kept Rome in a state of anarchy which is almost inexplicable. It was more than suspected that Crassus, now utterly estranged from Pompey, supplied out of

his enormous wealth the means of keeping on foot this lawless agitation. Elections were overawed, meetings of the Senate interrupted, assassinations threatened and attempted. Already men began to look to military rule, and to think a good cause none the worse for being backed by "strong battalions." Things were fast tending to the point where Pompey and Cæsar, trusty allies as yet in profession and appearance, deadly rivals at heart, hoped to step in with their veteran legions. Even Cicero, the man of peace and constitutional statesman, felt comfort in the thought that this final argument could be resorted to by his own party. But Clodius's mob-government, at any rate, was to be put an end to somewhat suddenly. Milo, now one of the candidates for the consulship, a man of determined and unscrupulous character, had turned his own weapons against him, and maintained an opposition patrol of hired gladiators and wild-beast fighters. The Senate quite approved, if they did not openly sanction, this irregular championship of their order. The two parties walked the streets of Rome like the Capulets and Montagues at Verona; and it was said that Milo had been heard to swear that he would rid the city of Clodius if he ever got the chance. It came at last, in a casual meeting on the Appian road, near Bovillæ. A scuffle began between their retainers, and Clodius was killed—his friends said, murdered. The excitement at Rome was intense: the dead body was carried and laid publicly on the Rostra. Riots ensued; Milo was obliged to fly, and renounce his hopes of power; and the Senate, intimidated, named Pompey—not indeed "Dictator,"

for the name had become almost as hateful as that of King—but sole consul, for the safety of the state.

Cicero had resumed his practice as an advocate, and was now called upon to defend Milo. But Pompey, either from some private grudge, or in order to win favour with the populace, determined that Milo should be convicted. The jury were overawed by his presence in person at the trial, and by the occupation by armed soldiers of all the avenues of the court under colour of keeping order. It was really as great an outrage upon the free administration of justice as the presence of a regiment of soldiers at the entrance to Westminster Hall would be at a modern trial for high treason or sedition. Cicero affected to see in Pompey's legionaries nothing more than the maintainers of the peace of the city. But he knew better; and the fine passage in the opening of his speech for the defence, as it has come down to us, is at once a magnificent piece of irony, and a vindication of the rights of counsel.

“Although I am conscious, gentlemen, that it is a disgrace to me to show fear when I stand here to plead in behalf of one of the bravest of men;—and especially does such weakness ill become me, that when Milo himself is far more anxious about the safety of the state than about his own, I should be unable to bring to his defence the like magnanimous spirit;—yet this strange scene and strangely constituted court does terrify my eyes, for, turn them where I will, I look in vain for the ancient customs of the Forum, and the old style of public trials. For your tribunal to-day is girt with no such audience as was wont; this

is no ordinary crowd that hems us in. Yon guards whom you see on duty in front of all the temples, though set to prevent violence, yet still do a sort of violence to the pleader ; since in the Forum and the court of justice, though the military force which surrounds us be wholesome and needful, yet we cannot even be thus freed from apprehension without looking with some apprehension on the means. And if I thought they were set there in hostile array against Milo, I would yield to circumstances, gentlemen, and feel there was no room for the pleader amidst such a display of weapons. But I am encouraged by the advice of a man of great wisdom and justice—of Pompey, who surely would not think it compatible with that justice, after committing a prisoner to the verdict of a jury, then to hand him over to the swords of his soldiers ; nor consonant with his wisdom to arm the violent passions of a mob with the authority of the state. Therefore those weapons, those officers and men, proclaim to us not peril but protection ; they encourage us to be not only undisturbed but confident ; they promise me not only support in pleading for the defence, but silence for it to be listened to. As to the rest of the audience, so far as it is composed of peaceful citizens, all, I know, are on our side ; nor is there any single man among all those crowds whom you see occupying every point from which a glimpse of this court can be gained, looking on in anxious expectation of the result of this trial, who, while he approves the boldness of the defendant, does not also feel that the fate of himself, his chil-

dren, and his country, hangs upon the issue of to-day."

After an elaborate argument to prove that the slaying of Clodius by Milo was in self-defence, or, at the worst, that it was a fate which he well deserved as a public enemy, he closes his speech with a peroration, the pathos of which has always been admired:—

"I would it had been the will of heaven—if I may say so with all reverence for my country, for I fear lest my duty to my client may make me say what is disloyal towards her—I would that Publius Clodius were not only alive, but that he were prætor, consul, dictator even, before my eyes had seen this sight! But what says Milo? He speaks like a brave man, and a man whom it is your duty to protect—'Not so—by no means,' says he. 'Clodius has met the doom he well deserved: I am ready, if it must be so, to meet that which I do not deserve.' . . . But I must stop; I can no longer speak for tears; and tears are an argument which he would scorn for his defence. I entreat you, I adjure you, ye who sit here in judgment, that in your verdict you dare to give utterance to what I know you feel."

But the appeal was in vain, or rather, as far as we can ascertain, was never made,—at least in such powerful terms as those in which we read it. The great advocate was wholly unmanned by the scene before him, grew nervous, and broke down utterly in his speech for the defence. This presence of a military force under the orders of Pompey—the man in whom he saw, as he hoped, the good genius of Rome—overawed

and disturbed him. The speech which we read is almost certainly not that which he delivered, but, as in the previous case of Verres, the finished and elaborate composition of his calmer hours. Milo was convicted by a large majority ; in fact, there can be little doubt but that he was legally guilty, however political expediency might, in the eyes of Cicero and his party, have justified his deed. Cato sat on the jury, and did all he could to insure an acquittal, showing openly his voting-paper to his fellow-jurors, with that scorn of the "liberty of silence" which he shared with Cicero.

Milo escaped any worse penalty by at once going into voluntary banishment at Marseilles. But he showed more practical philosophy than his advocate ; for when he read the speech in his exile, he is said to have declared that "it was fortunate for him it was not spoken, or he should never have known the flavour of the red mullet of Marseilles."

The removal of Clodius was a deliverance upon which Cicero never ceased to congratulate himself. That "battle of Bovillæ," as he terms it, became an era in his mental records of only less significance than his consulship. His own public life continued to be honourable and successful. He was elected into the College of Augurs, an honour which he had long coveted ; and he was appointed to the government of Cilicia. This latter was a greatness literally "thrust upon him," and which he would gladly have declined, for it took him away in these eventful days from his beloved Rome ; and to these grand opportunities for enriching himself he was, as has been said, honourably indiffe-

rent. The appointment to a distant province was, in fact, to a man like Cicero, little better than an honourable form of exile: it was like conferring on a man who had been, and might hope one day to be again, Prime Minister of England, the governor-generalship of Bombay.

One consolation he found on reaching his new government—that even in the farthest wilds of Cilicia there were people who had heard of “the consul who saved Rome.” And again the astonished provincials marvelled at a governor who looked upon them as having rights of their own, and neither robbed nor ill-used them. He made a little war, too, upon some troublesome hill-tribes (intrusting the command chiefly to his brother Quintus, who had served with distinction under Cæsar in Gaul), and gained a victory which his legions thought of sufficient importance to salute him with the honoured title of “imperator.” Such military honours are especially flattering to men who, like Cicero, are naturally and essentially civilians; and to Cicero’s vanity they were doubly delightful. Unluckily they led him to entertain hopes of the further glory of a triumph; and this, but for the revolution which followed, he might possibly have obtained. As it was, the only result was his parading about with him everywhere, from town to town, for months after his return, the lictors with laurelled fasces, which betokened that a triumph was claimed—a pompous incumbrance, which became, as he confessed, a grand subject for evil-disposed jesters, and a considerable inconvenience to himself.

CHAPTER V.

CICERO AND CÆSAR.

THE future master of Rome was now coming home, after nearly ten years' absence, at the head of the victorious legions with which he had struck terror into the Germans, overrun all Spain, left his mark upon Britain, and "pacified" Gaul. But Cicero, in common with most of the senatorial party, failed to see in Julius Cæsar the great man that he was. He hesitated a little—Cæsar would gladly have had his support, and made him fair offers; but when the Rubicon was crossed, he threw in his lot with Pompey. He was certainly influenced in part by personal attachment: Pompey seems to have exercised a degree of fascination over his weakness. He knew Pompey's indecision of character, and confessed that Cæsar was "a prodigy of energy;" but though the former showed little liking for him, he clung to him nevertheless. He foreboded that, let the contest end which way it would, "the result would certainly be a despotism." He foresaw that Pompey's real designs were as dangerous to the liberties of Rome as any of which Cæsar could be suspected. "*Sullaturit*

animus," he says of him in one of his letters, coining a verb to put his idea strongly—"he wants to be like Sulla." And it was no more than the truth. He found out afterwards, as he tells Atticus, that proscription-lists of all Cæsar's adherents had been prepared by Pompey and his partisans, and that his old friend's name figured as one of the victims. Only this makes it possible to forgive him for the little feeling that he showed when he heard of Pompey's own miserable end.

Cicero's conduct and motives at this eventful crisis have been discussed over and over again. It may be questioned whether at this date we are in any position to pass more than a very cautious and general judgment upon them. We want all the "state papers" and political correspondence of the day—not Cicero's letters only, but those of Cæsar and Pompey and Lentulus, and much information besides that was never trusted to pen or paper—in order to lay down with any accuracy the course which a really unselfish patriot could have taken. But there seems little reason to accuse Cicero of double-dealing or trimming in the worst sense. His policy was unquestionably, from first to last, a policy of expedients. But expediency is, and must be more or less, the watchword of a statesman. If he would practically serve his country, he must do to some extent what Cicero professed to do—make friends with those in power. "*Sic vivitur*"—"So goes the world;" "*Tempori serviendum est*"—"We must bend to circumstances"—these are not the noblest mottoes, but they are acted upon continually

by the most respectable men in public and private life, who do not open their hearts to their friends so unreservedly as Cicero does to his friend Atticus. It seemed to him a choice between Pompey and Cæsar; and he probably hoped to be able so far to influence the former, as to preserve some shadow of a constitution for Rome. What he saw in those “dregs of a Republic,”* as he himself calls it, that was worth preserving;—how any honest despotism could seem to him more to be dreaded than that prostituted liberty,—this is harder to comprehend. The remark of Abeken seems to go very near the truth—“His devotion to the commonwealth was grounded not so much upon his conviction of its actual merits, as of its fitness for the display of his own abilities.”

But that commonwealth was past saving even in name. Within two months of his having been declared a public enemy, all Italy was at Cæsar’s feet. Before another year was past, the battle of Pharsalia had been fought, and the great Pompey lay a headless corpse on the sea-shore in Egypt. It was suggested to Cicero, who had hitherto remained constant to the fortunes of his party, and was then in their camp at Dyrrachium, that he should take the chief command, but he had the sense to decline; and though men called him “traitor,” and drew their swords upon him, he withdrew from a cause which he saw was lost, and returned to Italy, though not to Rome.

The meeting between him and Cæsar, which came at last, set at rest any personal apprehensions from that

* “Fæx Romuli.”

quarter. Cicero does not appear to have made any dishonourable submission, and the conqueror's behaviour was nobly forgetful of the past. They gradually became on almost friendly terms. The orator paid the Dictator compliments in the Senate, and found that, in private society, his favourite jokes were repeated to the great man, and were highly appreciated. With such little successes he was obliged now to be content. He had again taken up his residence in Rome ; but his political occupation was gone, and his active mind had leisure to employ itself in some of his literary works.

It was at this time that the blow fell upon him which prostrated him for the time, as his exile had done, and under which he claims our far more natural sympathy. His dear daughter Tullia—again married, but unhappily, and just divorced—died at his Tusculan villa. Their loving intercourse had undergone no change from her childhood, and his grief was for a while inconsolable. He shut himself up for thirty days. The letters of condolence from well-meaning friends were to him—as they so often are—as the speeches of the three comforters to Job. He turned in vain, as he pathetically says, to philosophy for consolation.

It was at this time that he wrote two of his philosophical treatises, known to us as 'The True Ends of Life,'* and the 'Tusculan Disputations,' of which more will be said hereafter. In this latter, which he named from his favourite country-house, he addressed himself to the subjects which suited best with his own

* 'De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum'—a title hard to translate.

sorrowful mood under his recent bereavement. How men might learn to shake off the terrors of death—nay, to look upon it rather as a release from pain and evil ; how pain, mental and bodily, may best be borne ; how we may moderate our passions ; and, lastly, whether the practice of virtue be not all-sufficient for our happiness.

A philosopher does not always find in himself a ready pupil. It was hardly so in Cicero's case. His arguments were incontrovertible ; but he found them fail him sadly in their practical application to life. He never could shake off from himself that dread of death which he felt in a degree unusually vivid for a Roman. He sought his own happiness afterwards, as he had done before, rather in the exciting struggle of public life than in the special cultivation of any form of virtue ; and he did not even find the remedy for his present domestic sorrow in any of those general moral reflections which philosophy, Christian as well as pagan, is so ready to produce upon such occasions ; which are all so undeniable, and all so utterly unendurable to the mourner.

Cicero found his consolation, or that diversion of thought which so mercifully serves the purpose of consolation, where most men of active minds like his seek for it and find it—in hard work. The literary effort of writing and completing the works which have been just mentioned probably did more to soothe his mind than all the arguments which they contained. He resumed his practice as an advocate so far as to plead a cause before Cæsar, now ruling as Dictator at Rome—the last cause, as events happened, that he was

ever to plead. It was a cause of no great importance—a defence of Deiotarus, titular king of Armenia, who was accused of having entertained designs against the life of Cæsar while entertaining him as a guest in his palace. The Dictator reserved his judgment until he should have made his campaign against the Parthians. That more convenient season never came: for before the spring campaign could open, the fatal “Ides of March” cut short Cæsar’s triumphs and his life.

CHAPTER VI.

CICERO AND ANTONY.

IT remained for Cicero yet to take a part in one more great national struggle—the last for Rome and for himself. No doubt there was some grandeur in the cause which he once more so vigorously espoused—the recovery of the liberties of Rome. But all the thunders of Cicero's eloquence, and all the admiration of modern historians and poets, fail to enlist our hearty sympathies with the assassins of Cæsar. That “consecration of the dagger” to the cause of liberty has been the fruitful parent of too much evil ever since to make its use anything but hateful. That Cicero was among the actual conspirators is probably not true, though his enemies strongly asserted it. But at least he gloried in the deed when done, and was eager to claim all the honours of a tyrannicide. Nay, he went farther than the actual conspirators, in words at least; it is curious to find him so careful to disclaim complicity in the act. “Would that you had invited me to that banquet on the Ides of March! there would then have been no leavings from the feast,”—he writes to

Cassius. He would have had their daggers turned on Antony, at all events, as well as on Cæsar. He wishes that "the gods may damn Cæsar after he is dead;" professing on this occasion a belief in a future retribution, on which at other times he was sceptical. It is but right to remember all this, when the popular tide turned, and he himself came to be denounced to political vengeance. The levity with which he continually speaks of the assassination of Cæsar—a man who had never treated *him*, at any rate, with anything but a noble forbearance—is a blot on Cicero's character which his warmest apologists admit.

The bloody deed in the Capitol was done—a deed which was to turn out almost what Goethe called it—"the most absurd that ever was committed." The great Dictator who lay there alone, a "bleeding piece of earth," deserted by the very men who had sought of late to crown him, was perhaps Rome's fittest master; certainly not the worst of the many with whom a personal ambition took the place of principle. Three slaves took up the dead body of their master, and carried it home to his house. Poor wretches! they knew nothing about liberty or the constitution; they had little to hope, and probably little to fear; they had only a humble duty to do, and did it. But when we read of them, and of that freedman who, not long before, sat by the dead body of Pompey till he could scrape together wreck from the shore to light some sort of poor funeral-pile, we return with a shudder of disgust to those "noble Romans" who occupy at this time the foreground of history.

Cæsar had been removed, but it is plain that Brutus and Cassius and their party had neither the ability nor the energy to make any real use of their bloody triumph. Cicero soon lost all hope of seeing in them the liberators of his country, or of being able to guide himself the revolution which he hoped he had seen begun. "We have been freed," he writes to Atticus, "but we are not free." "We have struck down the tyrant, but the tyranny survives." Antony, in fact, had taken the place of Cæsar as master of Rome—a change in all respects for the worse. He had surrounded himself with guards; had obtained authority from the Senate to carry out all decrees and orders left by the late Dictator; and when he could not find, amongst Cæsar's memoranda, materials to serve his purpose, he did not hesitate to forge them. Cicero had no power, and might be in personal danger, for Antony knew his sentiments as to state matters generally, and more particularly towards himself. Rome was no longer any place for him, and he soon left it—this time a voluntary exile. He wandered from place to place, and tried as before to find interest and consolation in philosophy. It was now that he wrote his charming essays on 'Friendship' and on 'Old Age,' and completed his work 'On the Nature of the Gods,' and that on 'Divination.' His treatise 'De Officiis' (a kind of pagan 'Whole Duty of Man') is also of this date, as well as some smaller philosophical works which have been lost. He professed himself hopeless of his country's future, and disgusted with political life, and spoke of going to end his days at Athens.

But, as before and always, his heart was in the Forum at Rome. Political life was really the only atmosphere in which he felt himself breathe vigorously. Unquestionably he had also an earnest patriotism, which would have drawn him back to his country's side at any time when he believed that she had need of his help. He was told that he was needed there now ; that there was a prospect of matters going better for the cause of liberty ; that Antony was coming to terms of some kind with the party of Brutus,—and he returned.

For a short while these latter days brought with them a gleam of triumph almost as bright as that which had marked the overthrow of Catiline's conspiracy. Again, on his arrival at Rome, crowds rushed to meet him with compliments and congratulations, as they had done some thirteen years before. And in so far as his last days were spent in resisting to the utmost the basest of all Rome's bad men, they were to him greater than any triumph. Thenceforth it was a fight to the death between him and Antony ; so long as Antony lived, there could be no liberty for Rome. Cicero left it to his enemy to make the first attack. It soon came. Two days after his return, Antony spoke vehemently in the Senate against him, on the occasion of moving a resolution to the effect that divine honours should be paid to Cæsar. Cicero had purposely stayed away, pleading fatigue after his journey ; really, because such a proposition was odious to him. Antony denounced him as a coward and a traitor, and threatened to send men to pull down his

house about his head—that house which had once before been pulled down, and rebuilt for him by his remorseful fellow-citizens. Cicero went down to the Senate the following day, and there delivered a well-prepared speech, the first of those fourteen which are known to us as his ‘*Philippics*’—a name which he seems first to have given to them in jest, in remembrance of those which his favourite model Demosthenes had delivered at Athens against Philip of Macedon. He defended his own conduct, reviewed in strong but moderate terms the whole policy of Antony, and warned him—still ostensibly as a friend—against the fate of Cæsar. The speaker was not unconscious what his own might possibly be.

“I have already, senators, reaped fruit enough from my return home, in that I have had the opportunity to speak words which, whatever may betide, will remain in evidence of my constancy in my duty, and you have listened to me with much kindness and attention. And this privilege I will use so often as I may without peril to you and to myself; when I cannot, I will be careful of myself, not so much for my own sake as for the sake of my country. For me, the life that I have lived seems already wellnigh long enough, whether I look at my years or my honours; what little span may yet be added to it should be your gain and the state’s far more than my own.”

Antony was not in the house when Cicero spoke; he had gone down to his villa at Tibur. There he remained for a fortnight, brooding over his reply—taking lessons, it was said, from professors in the art

of rhetorical self-defence. At last he came to Rome, and answered his opponent. His speech has not reached us ; but we know that it contained the old charges of having put Roman citizens to death without trial in the case of the abettors of Catiline, and of having instigated Milo to the assassination of Clodius. Antony added a new charge—that of complicity with the murderers of Cæsar. Above all, he laughed at Cicero's old attempts as a poet ; a mode of attack which, if not so alarming, was at least as irritating as the rest. Cicero was not present—he dreaded personal violence ; for Antony, like Pompey at the trial of Milo, had planted an armed guard of his own men outside and inside the Senate-house. Before Cicero had nerved himself to reply, Antony had left Rome to put himself at the head of his legions, and the two never met again.

The reply, when it came, was the terrible second Philippic ; never spoken, however, but only handed about in manuscript to admiring friends. There is little doubt, as Mr Long observes, that Antony had also some friend kind enough to send him a copy ; and if we may trust the Roman poet Juvenal, who is at least as likely to have been well informed upon the subject as any modern historian, this composition eventually cost the orator his life. It is not difficult to understand the bitter vindictiveness of Antony. Cicero had been not merely a political opponent ; he had attacked his private character (which presented abundant grounds for such attack) with all the venom of his eloquence. He had said, indeed, in the first of

these powerful orations, that he had never taken this line.

“If I have abused his private life and character, I have no right to complain if he is my enemy: but if I have only followed my usual custom, which I have ever maintained in public life,—I mean, if I have only spoken my opinion on public questions freely,—then; in the first place, I protest against his being angry with me at all: or, if this be too much to expect, I demand that he should be angry with me only as with a fellow-citizen.”

If there had been any sort of reticence on this point hitherto on the part of Cicero, he made up for it in this second speech. Nothing can equal its bitter personality, except perhaps its rhetorical power. He begins the attack by declaring that he will not tell all he knows—“in order that, if we have to do battle again hereafter, I may come always fresh-armed to the attack; an advantage which the multiplicity of that man’s crimes and vices gives me in large measure.” Then he proceeds:—

“Would you like us, then, to examine into your course of life from boyhood? I conclude you would. Do you remember that before you put on the robe of manhood, you were a bankrupt? That was my father’s fault, you will say. I grant it—it is a defence that speaks volumes for your feelings as a son. It was your own shamelessness, however, that made you take your seat in the stalls of honourable knights, whereas by law there is a fixed place for bankrupts, even when they have become so by fortune’s fault, and not their

own. You put on the robe which was to mark your manhood,—on your person it became the flaunting gear of a harlot.”

It is not desirable to follow the orator through some of his accusations ; when he had to lash a man whom he held to be a criminal, he did not much care where or how he struck. He even breaks off himself—after saying a good deal.

“There are some things, which even a decent enemy hesitates to speak of. . . . Mark, then, his subsequent course of life, which I will trace as rapidly as I can. For though these things are better known to you than even to me, yet I ask you to hear me with attention—as indeed you do ; for it is right that in such cases men’s feelings should be roused not merely by the knowledge of the facts, but by calling them back to their remembrance ; though we must dash at once, I believe, into the middle of his history, lest we should be too long in getting to the end.”

The peroration is noble and dignified, in the orator’s best style. He still supposes himself addressing his enemy. He has warned Antony that Cæsar’s fate may be his : and he is not unconscious of the peril in which his own life may stand.

“But do you look to yourself—I will tell you how it stands with me. I defended the Commonwealth when I was young—I will not desert it now I am old. I despised the swords of Catiline—I am not likely to tremble before yours. Nay, I shall lay my life down gladly, if the liberty of Rome can be secured by my death, so that this suffering nation may at last bring to

the birth that which it has long been breeding.* If, twenty years ago, I declared in this house that death could never be said to have come before its time to a man who had been consul of Rome, with how much more truth, at my age, may I say it now! To me indeed, gentlemen of the Senate, death may well be a thing to be even desired, when I have done what I have done and reaped the honours I have reaped. Only two wishes I have,—the one, that at my death I may leave the Roman people free—the immortal gods can give me no greater boon than this; the other, that every citizen may meet with such reward as his conduct towards the state may have deserved.”

The publication of this unspoken speech raised for the time an enthusiasm against Antony, whom Cicero now openly declared to be an enemy to the state. He hurled against him Philippic after Philippic. The appeal at the end of that which comes the sixth in order is eloquent enough.

“The time is come at last, fellow-citizens; somewhat too late, indeed, for the dignity of the people of Rome, but at least the crisis is so ripe, that it cannot now be deferred an instant longer. We have had one calamity sent upon us, as I may say, by fate, which we bore with—in such sort as it might be borne. If another befalls us now, it will be one of our own choosing. That this Roman people should serve any master, when the gods above have willed us to be the masters of the world, is a crime in the sight of heaven. The question hangs now on its last issue. The struggle

* *I.e.*, the making away with Antony.

is for our liberties. You must either conquer, Romans,—and this, assuredly, with such patriotism and such unanimity as I see here, you must do,—or you must endure anything and everything rather than be slaves. Other nations may endure the yoke of slavery, but the birthright of the people of Rome is liberty.”

Antony had left Rome, and thrown himself, like Catiline, into the arms of his soldiers, in his province of Cisalpine Gaul. There he maintained himself in defiance of the Senate, who at last, urged by Cicero, declared him a public enemy. Cæsar Octavianus (great-nephew of Julius) offered his services to the state, and with some hesitation they were accepted. The last struggle was begun. Intelligence soon arrived that Antony had been defeated at Mutina by the two last consuls of the Republic, Hirtius and Pansa. The news was dashed, indeed, afterwards by the further announcement that both consuls had died of their wounds. But it was in the height of the first exultation that Cicero addressed to the Senate his fourteenth Philippic—the last oration which he was ever to make. For the moment, he found himself once more the foremost man at Rome. Crowds of roaring patriots had surrounded his house that morning, escorted him in triumph up to the Capitol, and back to his own house, as they had done in the days of his early glory. Young Cæsar, who had paid him much personal deference, was professing himself a patriot; the Commonwealth was safe again—and Cicero almost thought that he again himself had saved it.

But Rome now belonged to those who had the legions. It had come to that: and when Antony succeeded in joining interests with Octavianus (afterwards misnamed Augustus)—“the boy,” as both Cicero and Antony called him—a boy in years as yet, but premature in craft and falsehood—who had come “to claim his inheritance,” and succeeded in rousing in the old veterans of his uncle the desire to take vengeance on his murderers, the fate of the Republic and of Cicero was sealed.

It was on a little eyot formed by the river Reno, near Bologna, that Antony, young Cæsar, and Lepidus (the nominal third in what is known as the Second Triumvirate) met to arrange among themselves the division of power, and what they held to be necessary to the securing it for the future—the proscription of their several enemies. No private affections or interests were to be allowed to interfere with this merciless arrangement. If Lepidus would give up his brother, Antony would surrender an obnoxious uncle. Octavianus made a cheaper sacrifice in Cicero, whom Antony, we may be sure, with those terrible Philipics ringing in his ears, demanded with an eager vengeance. All was soon amicably settled; the proscription-lists were made out, and the Triumvirate occupied Rome.

Cicero and his brother—whose name was known to be also on the fatal roll—heard of it while they were together at the Tusculan villa. Both took immediate measures to escape. But Quintus had to return to Rome to get money for their flight, and, as it would

appear, to fetch his son. The emissaries of the Triumvirate were sent to search the house: the father had hid himself, but the son was seized, and refusing to give any information, was put to the torture. His father heard his cries of agony, came forth from his hiding-place, and asked only to be put to death first. The son in his turn made the same request, and the assassins were so far merciful that they killed both at once.

Cicero himself might yet have escaped, but for something of his old indecision. He had gone on board a small vessel with the intention of joining Brutus in Macedonia, when he suddenly changed his mind, and insisted on being put on shore again. He wandered about, half-resolving (for the third time) on suicide. He would go to Rome, stab himself on the altar-hearth in young Cæsar's house, and call down the vengeance of heaven upon the traitor. The accounts of these last hours of his life are, unfortunately, somewhat contradictory, and none of the authorities to be entirely depended on; Abeken has made a careful attempt to harmonise them, which it will be best here to follow.

Urged by the prayers of his slaves, the faithful adherents of a kind master, he once more embarked, and once more (Appian says, from sea-sickness, which he never could endure) landed near Caieta, where he had a seaside villa. Either there, or, as other accounts say, at his house at Formiæ, he laid himself down to pass the night, and wait for death. "Let me die," said he, "in my own country, which I have so often

saved." But again the faithful slaves aroused him, forced him into a litter, and hurried him down through the woods to the sea-shore—for the assassins were in hot pursuit of him. They found his house shut up; but some traitor showed them a short cut by which to overtake the fugitive. As he lay reading (it is said), even during these anxious moments, a play of his favourite Euripides, every line of whom he used to declare contained some maxim worth remembering, he heard their steps approaching, and ordered the litter to be set down. He looked out, and recognised at the head of the party an officer named Lænas, whom he had once successfully defended on a capital charge; but he saw no gratitude or mercy in the face, though there were others of the band who covered their eyes for pity, when they saw the dishevelled grey hair and pale worn features of the great Roman (he was within a month of sixty-four). He turned from Lænas to the centurion, one Herennius, and said, "Strike, old soldier, if you understand your trade!" At the third blow—by one or other of those officers, for both claimed the evil honour—his head was severed. They carried it straight to Antony, where he sat on the seat of justice in the Forum, and demanded the offered reward. The triumvir, in his joy, paid it some ten times over. He sent the bloody trophy to his wife; and the Roman Jezebel spat in the dead face, and ran her bodkin through the tongue which had spoken those bold and bitter truths against her false husband. The great orator fulfilled, almost in the very letter, the words which, treating of the

liberty of the pleader, he had put into the mouth of Crassus—"You must cut out this tongue, if you would check my free speech: nay, even then, my very breathing should protest against your lust for power." The head, by Antony's order, was then nailed upon the Rostra, to speak there, more eloquently than ever the living lips had spoken, of the dead liberty of Rome.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARACTER AS A POLITICIAN AND AN ORATOR.

CICERO shared very largely in the feeling which is common to all men of ambition and energy,—a desire to stand well not only with their own generation, but with posterity. It is a feeling natural to every man who knows that his name and acts must necessarily become historical. If it is more than usually patent in Cicero's case, it is only because in his letters to Atticus we have more than usual access to the inmost heart of the writer ; for surely such a thoroughly confidential correspondence has never been published before or since. "What will history say of me six hundred years hence?" he asks, unbosoming himself in this sort to his friend. More than thrice the six hundred years have passed, and, in Cicero's case, history has hardly yet made up its mind. He has been lauded and abused, from his own times down to the present, in terms as extravagant as are to be found in the most passionate of his own orations ; both his accusers and his champions have caught the trick of his rhetorical exaggeration more easily than his elo-

quence. Modern German critics like Drumann and Mommsen have attacked him with hardly less bitterness, though with more decency, than the historian Dio Cassius, who lived so near his own times. Conyers Middleton, on the other hand, in those pleasant and comprehensive volumes which are still to this day the great storehouse of materials for Cicero's biography, is as blind to his faults as though he were himself delivering a panegyric in the Rostra at Rome. Perhaps it is the partiality of this author's view which has produced a reaction in the minds of sceptical German scholars, and of some modern writers of our own. It is impossible not to sympathise in some degree with that Athenian who was tired of always hearing Aristides extolled as "the Just;" and there was certainly a strong temptation to critics to pick holes in a man's character who was perpetually, during his lifetime and for eighteen centuries after his death, having a trumpet sounded before him to announce him as the prince of patriots as well as philosophers; worthy indeed, as Erasmus thought, to be canonised as a saint of the Catholic Church, but for the single drawback of his not having been a Christian.

On one point some of his eulogists seem manifestly unfair. They say that the circumstances under which we form our judgment of the man are exceptional in this—that we happen to possess in his case all this mass of private and confidential letters (there are nearly eight hundred of his own which have come down to us), giving us an insight into his private motives, his secret jealousies, and hopes, and fears, and

ambitions, of which in the case of other men we have no such revelation. It is quite true ; but his advocates forget that it is from the very same pages which reveal his weaknesses, that they draw their real knowledge of many of those characteristics which they most admire—his sincere love for his country, his kindness of heart, his amiability in all his domestic relations. It is true that we cannot look into the private letters of Cæsar, or Pompey, or Brutus, as we can into Cicero's ; but it is not so certain that if we could, our estimate of their characters would be lowered. We might discover, in their cases as in his, many traces of what seems insincerity, timidity, a desire to sail with the stream ; we might find that the views which they expressed in public were not always those which they entertained in private ; but we might also find an inner current of kindness, and benevolence, and tenderness of heart, for which the world gives them little credit. One enthusiastic advocate, Wieland, goes so far as to wish that this kind of evidence could, in the case of such a man as Cicero, have been “cooked,” to use a modern phrase : that we could have had only a judicious selection from this too truthful mass of correspondence ; that his secretary, Tiro, or some judicious friend, had destroyed the whole packet of letters in which the great Roman bemoaned himself, during his exile from Rome, to his wife, to his brother, and to Atticus. The partisan method of writing history, though often practised, has seldom been so boldly professed.

But it cannot be denied, that if we know too much of Cicero to judge him merely by his public life, as we

are obliged to do with so many heroes of history, we also know far too little of those stormy times in which he lived, to pronounce too strongly upon his behaviour in such difficult circumstances. The true relations between the various parties at Rome, as we have tried to sketch them, are confessedly puzzling even to the careful student. And without a thorough understanding of these, it is impossible to decide, with any hope of fairness, upon Cicero's conduct as a patriot and a politician. His character was full of conflicting elements, like the times in which he lived, and was necessarily in a great degree moulded by them. The egotism which shows itself so plainly alike in his public speeches and in his private writings, more than once made him personal enemies, and brought him into trouble, though it was combined with great kindness of heart and consideration for others. He saw the right clearly, and desired to follow it, but his good intentions were too often frustrated by a want of firmness and decision. His desire to keep well with men of all parties, so long as it seemed possible (and this not so much from the desire of self-aggrandisement, as from a hope through their aid to serve the commonwealth) laid him open on more than one occasion to the charge of insincerity.

There is one comprehensive quality which may be said to have been wanting in his nature, which clouded his many excellences, led him continually into false positions, and even in his delightful letters excites in the reader, from time to time, an impatient feeling of contempt. He wanted manliness. It was a quality

which was fast dying out, in his day, among even the best of the luxurious and corrupt aristocracy of Rome. It was perhaps but little missed in his character by those of his contemporaries who knew and loved him best. But without that quality, to an English mind, it is hard to recognise in any man, however brilliant and amiable, the true philosopher or hero.

The views which this great Roman politician held upon the vexed question of the ballot did not differ materially from those of his worthy grandfather before-mentioned.* The ballot was popular at Rome,—for many reasons, some of them not the most creditable to the characters of the voters; and because it was popular, Cicero speaks of it occasionally, in his forensic speeches, with a cautious praise; but of his real estimate of it there can be no kind of doubt. “I am of the same opinion now,” he writes to his brother, “that ever I was; there is nothing like the open suffrage of the lips.” So in one of his speeches, he uses even stronger language: “The ballot,” he says, “enables men to open their faces, and to cover up their thoughts; it gives them licence to promise whatever they are asked, and at the same time to do whatever they please.” Mr Grote once quoted a phrase of Cicero’s, applied to the voting-papers of his day, as a testimony in favour of this mode of secret suffrage—grand words, and wholly untranslatable into anything like corresponding English—“*Tabella vindex tacitæ libertatis*”—“the tablet which secures the liberty of silence.” But knowing so well as Cicero did what was

* See p. 3.

the ordinary character of Roman jurors and Roman voters, and how often this "liberty of silence" was a liberty to take a bribe and to vote the other way, one can almost fancy that we see upon his lips, as he utters the sounding phrase, that playful curve of irony which is said to have been their characteristic expression.* Mr Grote forgot, too, as was well pointed out by a writer in the '*Quarterly Review*,'† that in the very next sentence the orator is proud to boast that he himself was not so elected to office, but "by the living voices" of his fellow-citizens.

The character of his eloquence may be understood in some degree by the few extracts which have been given from his public speeches; always remembering how many of its charms are necessarily lost by losing the actual language in which his thoughts were clothed. We have lost perhaps nearly as much in another way, in that we can only read the great orator instead of listening to him. Yet it is possible, after all, that this loss to us is not so great as it might seem. Some of his best speeches, as we know—those, for instance, against Verres and in defence of Milo—were written in the closet, and never spoken at all; and most of the others were reshaped and polished for publication. Nor is it certain that his declamation, which some of his Roman rivals found fault with as savouring too much of the florid Oriental type, would have been agree-

* No bust, coin, or gem is known which bears any genuine likeness of Cicero. There are several existing which purport to be such, but all are more or less apocryphal.

† *Quart. Rev.*, lxi. 522.

able to our colder English taste. He looked upon gesture and action as essential elements of the orator's power, and had studied them carefully from the artists of the theatre. There can be no doubt that we have his own views on this point in the words which he has put into the mouth of his "Brutus," in the treatise on oratory which bears that name. He protests against the "Attic coldness" of style which, he says, would soon empty the benches of their occupants. He would have the action and bearing of the speaker to be such that even the distant spectator, too far off to hear, should "know that there was a Roscius on the stage." He would have found a French audience in this respect more sympathetic than an English one.* His own highly nervous temperament would certainly tend to excited action. The speaker, who, as we are told, "shuddered visibly over his whole body when he first began to speak," was almost sure, as he warmed to his work, to throw himself into it with a passionate energy.

He has put on record his own ideas of the qualifications and the duties of the public speaker, whether in the Senate or at the bar, in three continuous treatises

* Our speakers certainly fall into the other extreme. The British orator's style of gesticulation may still be recognised, *mutatis mutandis*, in Addison's humorous sketch of a century ago: "You may see many a smart rhetorician turning his hat in his hands, moulding it into several different cocks, examining sometimes the lining and sometimes the button, during the whole course of his harangue. A deaf man would think that he was cheapening a beaver, when he is talking perhaps of the fate of the British nation."

on the subject, entitled respectively, 'On Oratory,' 'Brutus,' and 'The Orator,' as well as in some other works of which we have only fragments remaining. With the first of these works, which he inscribed to his brother, he was himself exceedingly well satisfied, and it perhaps remains still the ablest, as it was the first, attempt to reduce eloquence to a science. The second is a critical sketch of the great orators of Rome: and in the third we have Cicero's view of what the perfect orator should be. His ideal is a high one, and a true one; that he should not be the mere rhetorician, any more than the mere technical lawyer or keen partisan, but the man of perfect education and perfect taste, who can speak on all subjects, out of the fulness of his mind, "with variety and copiousness."

Although, as has been already said, he appears to have attached but little value to a knowledge of the technicalities of law, in other respects his preparation for his work was of the most careful kind; if we may assume, as we probably may, that it is his own experience which, in his treatise on Oratory, he puts into the mouth of Marcus Antonius, one of his greatest predecessors at the Roman bar.

"It is my habit to have every client explain to me personally his own case; to allow no one else to be present, that so he may speak more freely. Then I take the opponent's side, while I make him plead his own cause, and bring forward whatever arguments he can think of. Then, when he is gone, I take upon myself, with as much impartiality as I can, three different characters—my own, my opponent's, and that of

the jury. Whatever point seems likely to help the case rather than injure it, this I decide must be brought forward ; when I see that anything is likely to do more harm than good, I reject and throw it aside altogether. So I gain this,—that I think over first what I mean to say, and speak afterwards ; while a good many pleaders, relying on their abilities, try to do both at once.”*

He reads a useful lesson to young and zealous advocates in the same treatise—that sometimes it may be wise not to touch at all in reply upon a point which makes against your client, and to which you have no real answer ; and that it is even more important to say nothing which may injure your case, than to omit something which might possibly serve it. A maxim which some modern barristers (and some preachers also) might do well to bear in mind.

Yet he did not scorn to use what may almost be called the tricks of his art, if he thought they would help to secure him a verdict. The outward and visible appeal to the feelings seems to have been as effective in the Roman forum as with a British jury. Cicero would have his client stand by his side dressed in mourning, with hair dishevelled, and in tears, when he meant to make a pathetic appeal to the compassion of the jurors ; or a family group would be arranged, as circumstances allowed,—the wife and children, the mother and sisters, or the aged father, if presentable, would be introduced in open court to create a sensation at the right moment. He had tears ap-

* *De Oratore*, II. 24, 72.

parently as ready at his command as an eloquent and well-known English Attorney-General. Nay, the tears seem to have been marked down, as it were, upon his brief. "My feelings prevent my saying more," he declares in his defence of Publius Sylla. "I weep while I make the appeal"—"I cannot go on for tears"—he repeats towards the close of that fine oration in behalf of Milo—the speech that never was spoken. Such phrases remind us of the story told of a French preacher, whose manuscripts were found to have marginal stage directions: "Here take out your handkerchief;"—"here cry—if possible." But such were held to be the legitimate adjuncts of Roman oratory, and it is quite possible to conceive that the advocate, like more than one modern tragedian who could be named, entered so thoroughly into the spirit of the part that the tears flowed quite naturally.

A far less legitimate weapon of oratory—offensive and not defensive—was the bitter and coarse personality in which he so frequently indulged. Its use was held perfectly lawful in the Roman forum, whether in political debate or in judicial pleadings, and it was sure to be highly relished by a mixed audience. There is no reason to suppose that Cicero had recourse to it in any unusual degree; but employ it he did, and most unscrupulously. It was not only private character that he attacked, as in the case of Antony and Clodius, but even personal defects or peculiarities were made the subject of bitter ridicule. He did not hesitate to season his harangue by a sarcasm on the cast in the prosecutor's eye, or the wen on the defendant's neck, and to direct the attention of the court to these

points, as though they were corroborative evidence of a moral deformity. The most conspicuous instance of this practice of his is in the invective which he launched in the Senate against Piso, who had made a speech reflecting upon him. Referring to Cicero's exile, he had made that sore subject doubly sore by declaring that it was not Cicero's unpopularity, so much as his unfortunate propensity to bad verse, which had been the cause of it. A jingling line of his to the effect that

"The gown wins grander triumphs than the sword"*

had been thought to be pointed against the recent victories of Pompey, and to have provoked him to use his influence to get rid of the author. But this annotation of Cicero's poetry had not been Piso's only offence. He had been consul at the time of the exile, and had given vent, it may be remembered, to the witticism that the "saviour of Rome" might save the city a second time by his absence. Cicero was not the man to forget it. The beginning of his attack on Piso is lost, but there is quite enough remaining. Piso was of a swarthy complexion, approaching probably to the negro type. "Beast"—is the term by which Cicero addresses him. "Beast! there is no mistaking the evidence of that slave-like hue, those bristly cheeks, those discoloured fangs. Your eyes, your brows, your face, your whole aspect, are the tacit index to your soul."†

* "*Cedant arma togæ, concedat laurea linguæ.*"

† Such flowers of eloquence are not encouraged at the modern bar. But they were common enough, even in the English law-courts, in former times. Mr Attorney-General Coke's language

It is not possible, within the compass of these pages, to give even the briefest account of more than a few of the many causes (they are twenty-four in number) in which the speeches made by Cicero, either for the prosecution or the defence, have been preserved to us. Some of them have more attraction for the English reader than others, either from the facts of the case being more interesting or more easily understood, or from their affording more opportunity for the display of the speaker's powers.

Mr Fox had an intense admiration for the speech in defence of Cælius. The opinion of one who was no mean orator himself, on his great Roman predecessor, may be worth quoting :—

“Argumentative contention is not what he excels in ; and he is never, I think, so happy as when he has an opportunity of exhibiting a mixture of philosophy and pleasantry, and especially when he can interpose anecdotes and references to the authority of the eminent characters in the history of his own country. No man appears, indeed, to have had such a real respect for authority as he ; and therefore when he speaks on that subject he is always natural and earnest.” *

to Raleigh at his trial—“Thou viper !”—comes quite up to Cicero's. Perhaps the Irish House of Parliament, while it existed, furnished the choicest modern specimens of this style of oratory. Mr O'Flanagan, in his ‘Lives of the Lord Chancellors of Ireland,’ tells us that a member for Galway, attacking an opponent when he knew that his sister was present during the debate, denounced the whole family—“from the toothless old hag that is now grinning in the gallery, to the white-livered scoundrel that is shivering on the floor.”

* Letter to G. Wakefield—Correspondence, p. 35.

There is anecdote and pleasantry enough in this particular oration ; but the scandals of Roman society of that day, into which the defence of Cælius was obliged to enter, are not the most edifying subject for any readers. Cælius was a young man of "equestrian" rank, who had been a kind of ward of Cicero's, and must have given him a good deal of trouble by his profligate habits, if the guardianship was anything more than nominal. But in this particular case the accusation brought against him—of trying to murder an ambassador from Egypt by means of hired assassins, and then to poison the lady who had lent him the money to bribe them with—was probably untrue. Clodia, the lady in question, was the worthy sister of the notorious Clodius, and bore as evil a reputation as it was possible for a woman to bear in the corrupt society of Rome—which is saying a great deal. She is the real mover in the case, though another enemy of Cælius, the son of a man whom he had himself brought to trial for bribery, was the ostensible prosecutor. Cicero, therefore, throughout the whole of his speech, aims the bitter shafts of his wit and eloquence at Clodia. His brilliant invectives against this lady, who was, as he pointedly said, "not only noble but notorious," are not desirable to quote. But the opening of the speech is in the advocate's best style. The trial, it seems, took place on a public holiday, when it was not usual to take any cause unless it were of pressing importance.

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"If any spectator be here present, gentlemen, who knows nothing of our laws, our courts of justice, or

our national customs, he will not fail to wonder what can be the atrocious nature of this case, that on a day of national festival and public holiday like this, when all other business in the Forum is suspended, this single trial should be going on ; and he will entertain no doubt but that the accused is charged with a crime of such enormity, that if it were not at once taken cognisance of, the constitution itself would be in peril. And if he heard that there was a law which enjoined that in the case of seditious and disloyal citizens who should take up arms to attack the Senate-house, or use violence against the magistrates, or levy war against the commonwealth, inquisition into the matter should be made at once, on the very day ;—he would not find fault with such a law : he would only ask the nature of the charge. But when he heard that it was no such atrocious crime, no treasonable attempt, no violent outrage, which formed the subject of this trial, but that a young man of brilliant abilities, hard-working in public life, and of popular character, was here accused by the son of a man whom he had himself once prosecuted, and was still prosecuting, and that all a bad woman's wealth and influence was being used against him,—he might take no exception to the filial zeal of Atratinus ; but he would surely say that woman's infamous revenge should be baffled and punished. . . . I can excuse Atratinus ; as to the other parties, they deserve neither excuse nor forbearance."

It was a strange story, the case for the prosecution, especially as regarded the alleged attempt to poison Clodia. The poison was given to a friend of Cælius,

he was to give it to some slaves of Clodia whom he was to meet at certain baths frequented by her, and they were in some way to administer it. But the slaves betrayed the secret; and the lady employed certain gay and profligate young men, who were hangers-on of her own, to conceal themselves somewhere in the baths, and pounce upon Cælius's emissary with the poison in his possession. But this scheme was said to have failed. Clodia's detectives had rushed from their place of concealment too soon, and the bearer of the poison escaped. The counsel for the prisoner makes a great point of this.

“Why, 'tis the catastrophe of a stage-play—nay, of a burlesque; when no more artistic solution of the plot can be invented, the hero escapes, the bell rings, and—the curtain falls! For I ask why, when Licinius was there trembling, hesitating, retreating, trying to escape—why that lady's body-guard let him go out of their hands? Were they afraid lest, so many against one, such stout champions against a single helpless man, frightened as he was and fierce as they were, they could not master him? I should like exceedingly to see them, those curled and scented youths, the bosom-friends of this rich and noble lady; those stout men-at-arms who were posted by their she-captain in this ambuscade in the baths. And I should like to ask them how they hid themselves, and where? A bath?—why, it must rather have been a Trojan horse, which bore within its womb this band of invincible heroes who went to war for a woman! I would make them answer this question,—why they, being so many

and so brave, did not either seize this slight stripling, whom you see before you, where he stood, or overtake him when he fled? They will hardly be able to explain themselves, I fancy, if they get into that witness-box, however clever and witty they may be at the banquet,—nay, even eloquent occasionally, no doubt, over their wine. But the air of a court of justice is somewhat different from that of the banquet-hall; the benches of this court are not like the couches of a supper-table; the array of this jury presents a different spectacle from a company of revellers; nay, the broad glare of sunshine is harder to face than the glitter of the lamps. If they venture into it, I shall have to strip them of their pretty conceits and fools' gear. But, if they will be ruled by me, they will betake themselves to another trade, win favour in another quarter, flaunt themselves elsewhere than in this court. Let them carry their brave looks to their lady there; let them lord it at her expense, cling to her, lie at her feet, be her slaves; only let them make no attempt upon the life and honour of an innocent man."

The satellites of Clodia could scarcely have felt comfortable under this withering fire of sarcasm. The speaker concluded with an apology—much required—for his client's faults, as those of a young man, and a promise on his behalf—on the faith of an advocate—that he would behave better for the future. He wound up the whole with a point of sensational rhetoric which was common, as has been said, to the Roman bar as to our own—an appeal to the jurymen as fathers. He pointed to the aged father of

the defendant, leaning in the most approved attitude upon the shoulder of his son. Either this, or the want of evidence, or the eloquence of the pleader, had its due effect. *Cælius* was triumphantly acquitted; and it is a proof that the young man was not wholly graceless, that he rose afterwards to high public office, and never forgot his obligations to his eloquent counsel, to whom he continued a staunch friend. He must have had good abilities, for he was honoured with frequent letters from *Cicero* when the latter was governor of *Cilicia*. He kept up some of his extravagant tastes; for when he was *Ædile* (which involved the taking upon him the expense of certain gladiatorial and wild-beast exhibitions), he wrote to beg his friend to send him out of his province some panthers for his show. *Cicero* complied with the request, and took the opportunity, so characteristic of him, of lauding his own administration of *Cilicia*, and making a kind of pun at the same time. "I have given orders to the hunters to see about the panthers; but panthers are very scarce, and the few there are complain, people say, that in the whole province there are no traps laid for anybody but for them." Catching and skinning the unfortunate provincials, which had been a favourite sport with governors like *Verres*, had been quite done away with in *Cilicia*, we are to understand, under *Cicero's* rule.

His defence of *Ligarius*, who was impeached of treason against the state in the person of *Cæsar*, as having borne arms against him in his African campaign, has also been deservedly admired. There was some courage in *Cicero's* undertaking his defence; as a known parti-

san of Pompey, he was treading on dangerous and delicate ground. Cæsar was dictator at the time ; and the case seems to have been tried before him as the sole judicial authority, without pretence of the intervention of anything like a jury. The defence—if defence it may be called—is a remarkable instance of the common appeal, not to the merits of the case, but to the feelings of the court. After making out what case he could for his client, the advocate as it were throws up his brief, and rests upon the clemency of the judge. Cæsar himself, it must be remembered, had begun public life, like Cicero, as a pleader : and, in the opinion of some competent judges, such as Tacitus and Quintilian, had bid fair to be a close rival.

“I have pleaded many causes, Cæsar—some, indeed, in association with yourself, while your public career spared you to the courts ; but surely I never yet used language of this sort,—‘Pardon him, sirs, he has offended : he has made a false step : he did not think to do it ; he never will again.’ This is language we use to a father. To the court it must be,—‘He did not do it : he never contemplated it : the evidence is false ; the charge is fabricated.’ If you tell me you sit but as the judge of the fact in this case, Cæsar,—if you ask me where and when he served against you,—I am silent ; I will not now dwell on the extenuating circumstances, which even before a judicial tribunal might have their weight. We take this course before a judge, but I am here pleading to a father. ‘I have erred—I have done wrong, I am sorry : I take refuge in your clemency ; I ask forgiveness for my fault ; I pray you,

pardon me.' . . . There is nothing so popular, believe me, sir, as kindness ; of all your many virtues none wins men's admiration and their love like mercy. In nothing do men reach so near the gods, as when they can give life and safety to mankind. Fortune has given you nothing more glorious than the power, your own nature can supply nothing more noble than the will, to spare and pardon wherever you can. The case perhaps demands a longer advocacy—your gracious disposition feels it too long already. So I make an end, preferring for my cause that you should argue with your own heart, than that I or any other should argue with you. I will urge nothing more than this,—the grace which you shall extend to my client in his absence, will be felt as a boon by all here present."

The great conqueror was, it is said, visibly affected by the appeal, and Ligarius was pardoned.

CHAPTER VIII.

MINOR CHARACTERISTICS.

NOT content with his triumphs in prose, Cicero had always an ambition to be a poet. Of his attempts in this way we have only some imperfect fragments, scattered here and there through his other works, too scanty to form any judgment upon. His poetical ability is apt to be unfairly measured by two lines which his opponents were very fond of quoting and laughing at, and which for that reason have become the best known. But it is obvious that if Wordsworth or Tennyson were to be judged solely by a line or two picked out by an unfavourable reviewer—say from ‘Peter Bell’ or from the early version of the ‘Miller’s Daughter’—posterity would have a very mistaken appreciation of their merits. Plutarch and the younger Pliny, who had seen more of Cicero’s poetry than we have, thought highly of it. So he did himself; but so it was his nature to think of most of his own performances; and such an estimate is common to other authors besides Cicero, though few announce it so openly. Montaigne takes him to task for this, with

more wit, perhaps, than fairness. "It is no great fault to write poor verses; but it is a fault not to be able to see how unworthy such poor verses were of his reputation." Voltaire, on the other hand, who was perhaps as good a judge, thought there was "nothing more beautiful" than some of the fragments of his poem on 'Marius,' who was the ideal hero of his youth. Perhaps the very fact, however, of none of his poems having been preserved, is some argument that such poetic gift as he had was rather facility than genius. He wrote, besides this poem on 'Marius,' a 'History of my Consulship,' and a 'History of my Own Times,' in verse, and some translations from Homer.

He had no notion of what other men called relaxation: he found his own relaxation in a change of work. He excuses himself in one of his orations for this strange taste, as it would seem to the indolent and luxurious Roman nobles with whom he was so unequally yoked.

"Who after all shall blame me, or who has any right to be angry with me, if the time which is not grudged to others for managing their private business, for attending public games and festivals, for pleasures of any other kind,—nay, even for very rest of mind and body,—the time which others give to convivial meetings, to the gaming-table, to the tennis-court,—this much I take for myself, for the resumption of my favourite studies?"

In this indefatigable appetite for work of all kinds, he reminds us of no modern politician so much as of Sir George Cornwall Lewis; yet he would not have altogether agreed with him in thinking that life would

be very tolerable if it were not for its amusements. He was, as we have seen, of a naturally social disposition. "I like a dinner-party," he says in a letter to one of his friends, "where I can say just what comes uppermost, and turn my sighs and sorrows into a hearty laugh. I doubt whether you are much better yourself, when you can laugh as you did even at a philosopher. When the man asked—'Whether anybody wanted to know anything?' you said you had been wanting to know all day when it would be dinner-time. The fellow expected you to say you wanted to know how many worlds there were, or something of that kind."*

He is said to have been a great laugher. Indeed, he confesses honestly that the sense of humour was very powerful with him—"I am wonderfully taken by anything comic," he writes to one of his friends. He reckons humour also as a useful ally to the orator. "A happy jest or facetious turn is not only pleasant, but also highly useful occasionally;" but he adds that this is an accomplishment which must come naturally, and cannot be taught under any possible system.† There is at least sufficient evidence that he was much given to making jokes, and some of them which have come down to us would imply that a Roman audience was not very critical on this point. There is an air of gravity about all courts of justice which probably

* These professional philosophers, at literary dinner-parties, offered to discuss and answer any question propounded by the company.

† De Orat. II. 54.

makes a very faint amount of jocularly hailed as a relief. Even in an English law-court, a joke from the bar, much more from the bench, does not need to be of any remarkable brilliancy in order to be secure of raising a laugh; and we may fairly suppose that the same was the case at Rome. Cicero's jokes were frequently nothing more than puns, which it would be impossible, even if it were worth while, to reproduce to an English ear. Perhaps the best, or at all events the most intelligible, is his retort to Hortensius during the trial of Verres. The latter was said to have fed his counsel out of his Sicilian spoils—especially, there was a figure of a sphinx, of some artistic value, which had found its way from the house of the ex-governor into that of Hortensius. Cicero was putting a witness through a cross-examination of which his opponent could not see the bearing. "I do not understand all this," said Hortensius; "I am no hand at solving riddles." "That is strange, too," rejoined Cicero, "when you have a sphinx at home." In the same trial he condescended, in the midst of that burning eloquence of which we have spoken, to make two puns on the defendant's name. The word "*Verres*" had two meanings in the old Latin tongue: it signified a "boar-pig," and also a "broom" or "sweeping-brush." One of Verres's friends, who either was or had the reputation of being a Jew, had tried to get the management of the prosecution out of Cicero's hands. "What has a Jew to do with *pork*?" asked the orator. Speaking, in the course of the same trial, of the way in which the governor had made "requisitions" of all the most

valuable works of art throughout the island, "the broom," said he, "swept clean." He did not disdain the comic element in poetry more than in prose; for we find in Quintilian * a quotation from a punning epigram in some collection of such trifles which in his time bore Cicero's name. Tiro is said to have collected and published three volumes of his master's good things after his death; but if they were not better than those which have come down to us, as contained in his other writings, there has been no great loss to literature in Tiro's 'Ciceroniana.' He knew one secret at least of a successful humourist in society: for it is to him that we owe the first authoritative enunciation of a rule which is universally admitted — "that a jest never has so good an effect as when it is uttered with a serious countenance."

Cicero had a wonderful admiration for the Greeks. "I am not ashamed to confess," he writes to his brother, "especially since my life and career have been such that no suspicion of indolence or want of energy can rest upon me, that all my own attainments are due to those studies and those accomplishments which have been handed down to us in the literary treasures and the philosophical systems of the Greeks." It was no mere rhetorical outburst, when in his defence of Valerius Flaccus, accused like Verres, whether truly or falsely, of corrupt administration in his province, he thus introduced the deputation from Athens and Lacedæmon who appeared as witnesses to the character of his client.

* 'Libellus Jocularis,' Quint. viii. 6.

“Athenians are here to-day, amongst whom civilisation, learning, religion, agriculture, public law and justice, had their birth, and whence they have been disseminated over all the world: for the possession of whose city, on account of its exceeding beauty, even gods are said to have contended: which is of such antiquity, that she is said to have bred her citizens within herself, and the same soil is termed at once their mother, their nurse, and their country: whose importance and influence is such that the name of Greece, though it has lost much of its weight and power, still holds its place by virtue of the renown of this single city.”

He had forgotten, perhaps, as an orator is allowed to forget, that in the very same speech, when his object was to discredit the accusers of his client, he had said, what was very commonly said of the Greeks at Rome, that they were a nation of liars. There were excellent men among them, he allowed—thinking at the moment of the counter-evidence which he had ready for the defendant—but he goes on to make this sweeping declaration:—

“I will say this of the whole race of the Greeks: I grant them literary genius, I grant them skill in various accomplishments, I do not deny them elegance in conversation, acuteness of intellect, fluent oratory; to any other high qualities they may claim I make no objection: but the sacred obligation that lies upon a witness to speak the truth is what that nation has never regarded.”*

There was a certain proverb, he went on to say, “Lend me your evidence,” implying—“and you shall

* Defence of Val. Flaccus, c. 4.

have mine when you want it ;" a Greek proverb, of course, and men knew these three words of Greek who knew no Greek besides. What he loved in the Greeks, then, was rather the grandeur of their literature and the charm of their social qualities (a strict regard for truth is, unhappily, no indispensable ingredient in this last) ; he had no respect whatever for their national character. The orator was influenced, perhaps, most of all by his intense reverence for the Athenian Demosthenes, whom, as a master in his art, he imitated and wellnigh worshipped. The appreciation of his own powers which every able man has, and of which Cicero had at least his share, fades into humility when he comes to speak of his great model. "Absolutely perfect," he calls him in one place ; and again in another, "What I have attempted, Demosthenes has achieved." Yet he felt also at times, when the fervour of genius was strong within him, that there was an ideal of eloquence enshrined in his own inmost mind, "which I can *feel*," he says, "but which I never knew to exist in any man."

He could not only write Greek as a scholar, but seems to have spoken it with considerable ease and fluency ; for on one occasion he made a speech in that language, a condescension which some of his friends thought derogatory to the dignity of a Roman.

From the Greeks he learnt to appreciate art. How far his taste was really cultivated in this respect is difficult for us to judge. Some passages in his letters to Atticus might lead us to suspect that, as Disraeli concludes, he was rather a collector than a real lover

of art. His appeals to his friend to buy up for him everything and anything, and his surrender of himself entirely to Atticus's judgment in such purchases, do not bespeak a highly critical taste. In a letter to another friend, he seems to say that he only bought statuary as "furniture" for the gymnasium at his country-seat; and he complains that four figures of Bacchanals, which this friend had just bought for him, had cost more than he would care to give for all the statues that ever were made. On the other hand, when he comes to deal with Verres's wholesale plunder of paintings and statues in Sicily, he talks about the several works with considerable enthusiasm. Either he really understood his subject, or, like an able advocate, he had thoroughly got up his brief. But the art-notices which are scattered through his works show a considerable acquaintance with the artist-world of his day. He tells us, in his own admirable style, the story of Zeuxis, and the selection which he made from all the beauties of Crotona, in order to combine their several points of perfection in his portrait of Helen; he refers more than once, and always in language which implies an appreciation of the artist, to the works of Phidias, especially that which is said to have cost him his life—the shield of Minerva; and he discusses, though it is but by way of illustration, the comparative points of merit in the statues of Calamis, and Myron, and Polycletus, and in the paintings of the earlier schools of Zeuxis, Polygnotus, and Timanthes, with their four primitive colours, as compared with the more finished schools of Protogenes and Apelles.

CHAPTER IX.

CICERO'S CORRESPONDENCE.

I. ATTICUS.

IT seems wonderful how, in the midst of all his work, Cicero found time to keep up such a voluminous correspondence. Something like eight hundred of his letters still remain to us, and there were whole volumes of them long preserved which are now lost,* to say nothing of the very many which may never have been thought worth preserving. The secret lay in his wonderful energy and activity. We find him writing letters before day-break, during the service of his meals, on his journeys, and dictating them to an amanuensis as he walked up and down to take needful exercise.

His correspondents were of almost all varieties of position and character, from Cæsar and Pompey, the great men of the day, down to his domestic servant

* Collections of his letters to Cæsar, Brutus, Cornelius Nepos the historian, Hirtius, Pansa, and to his son, are known to have existed.

and secretary, Tiro. Amongst them were rich and ease-loving Epicureans like Atticus and Pætus, and even men of pleasure like Cælius: grave Stoics like Cato, eager patriots like Brutus and Cassius, authors such as Cornelius Nepos and Luceius the historians, Varro the grammarian, and Metius the poet; men who dabbled with literature in a gentleman-like way, like Hirtius and Appius, and the accomplished literary critic and patron of the day—himself of no mean reputation as poet, orator, and historian—Caius Asinius Pollio. Cicero's versatile powers found no difficulty in suiting the contents of his own letters to the various tastes and interests of his friends. Sometimes he sends to his correspondent what was in fact a political journal of the day—rather one-sided, it must be confessed, as all political journals are, but furnishing us with items of intelligence which throw light, as nothing else can, on the history of those latter days of the Republic. Sometimes he jots down the mere gossip of his last dinner-party; sometimes he notices the speculations of the last new theorist in philosophy, or discusses with a literary friend some philological question—the latter being a study in which he was very fond of dabbling, though with little success, for the science of language was as yet unknown.

His chief correspondent, as has been said, was his old school-fellow and constant friend through life, Pomponius Atticus. The letters addressed to him which still remain to us cover a period of twenty-four years, with a few occasional interruptions, and the correspondence only ceased with Cicero's death. The

Athenianised Roman, though he had deliberately withdrawn himself from the distracting factions of his native city, which he seldom revisited, kept on the best terms with the leaders of all parties, and seems to have taken a very lively interest, though merely in the character of a looker-on, in the political events which crowded so fast upon each other during the fifty years of his voluntary expatriation. Cicero's letters were to him what an English newspaper would be now to an English gentleman who for his own reasons preferred to reside in Paris, without forswearing his national interests and sympathies. At times, when Cicero was more at leisure, and when messengers were handy (for we have to remember that there was nothing like our modern post), Cicero would despatch one of these letters to Atticus daily. We have nearly four hundred of them in all. They are continually garnished, even to the point of affectation, with Greek quotations and phrases, partly perhaps in compliment to his friend's Athenian tastes, and partly from the writer's own passion for the language.

So much reference has been made to them throughout the previous biographical sketch,—for they supply us with some of the most important materials for Cicero's life and times,—that it may be sufficient to give in this place two or three of the shorter as specimens of the collection. One which describes a visit which he received from Julius Cæsar, already dictator, in his country-house near Puteoli, is interesting, as affording a glimpse behind the scenes in those momentous days when no one knew exactly whether the

great captain was to turn out a patriot or a conspirator against the liberties of Rome.

“To think that I should have had such a tremendous visitor ! But never mind ; for all went off very pleasantly. But when he arrived at Philippus’s house* on the evening of the second day of the Saturnalia, the place was so full of soldiers that they could hardly find a spare table for Cæsar himself to dine at. There were two thousand men. Really I was in a state of perplexity as to what was to be done next day : but Barba Cassius came to my aid,—he supplied me with a guard. They pitched their tents in the grounds, and the house was protected. He stayed with Philippus until one o’clock on the third day of the Saturnalia, and would see no one. Going over accounts, I suppose, with Balbus. Then he walked on the sea-shore. After two he had a bath : then he listened to some verses on Mamurra, without moving a muscle of his countenance : then dressed,† and sat down to dinner. He had taken a precautionary emetic, and therefore ate and drank heartily and unrestrainedly. We had, I assure you, a very good dinner, and well served ; and not only that, but

‘The feast of reason and the flow of soul’‡

besides. His suite were abundantly supplied at three other tables : the freedmen of lower rank, and even

* This was close to Cicero’s villa, on the coast.

† Literally, “he got himself oiled.” The emetic was a disgusting practice of Roman *bon vivants* who were afraid of indigestion.

‡ The verse which Cicero quotes from Lucilius is fairly equivalent to this.

the slaves, were well taken care of. The higher class had really an elegant entertainment. Well, no need to make a long story; we found we were both 'flesh and blood.' Still he is not the kind of guest to whom you would say—'Now do, pray, take us in your way on your return.' Once is enough. We had no conversation on business, but a good deal of literary talk. In short, he seemed to be much pleased, and to enjoy himself. He said he should stay one day at Puteoli, and another at Baia. So here you have an account of this visit, or rather quartering of troops upon me, which I disliked the thoughts of, but which really, as I have said, gave me no annoyance. I shall stay here a little longer, then go to my house at Tusculum. When Cæsar passed Dolabella's villa, all the troops formed up on the right and left of his horse, which they did nowhere else.* I heard that from Nicias."

In the following, he is anticipating a visit from his friend, and from the lady to whom he is betrothed.

"I had a delightful visit from Cincius on the 30th of January, before daylight. For he told me that you were in Italy, and that he was going to send off some messengers to you, and would not let them go without a letter from me. Not that I have much to write about (especially when you are all but here), except to assure you that I am anticipating your arrival with the greatest delight. Therefore fly to me, to show your own affection, and to see what affection I bear you. Other matters when we meet. I have written this in a hurry. As soon as ever you arrive, bring all your

* Probably by way of salute; or possibly as a precaution.

people to my house. You will gratify me very much by coming. You will see how wonderfully well Tyrannio has arranged my books, the remains of which are much better than I had thought. And I should be very glad if you could send me a couple of your library clerks whom Tyrannio could make use of as binders, and to help him in other ways; and tell them to bring some parchment to make indices—syllabuses, I believe you Greeks call them. But this only if quite convenient to you. But, at any rate, be sure you come yourself, if you can make any stay in our parts, and bring Pilia with you, for that is but fair, and Tullia wishes it much. Upon my word you have bought a very fine place. I hear that your gladiators fight capitally. If you had cared to hire them out, you might have cleared your expenses at these two last public shows. But we can talk about this hereafter. Be sure to come; and do your best about the clerks, if you love me.”

The Roman gentleman of elegant and accomplished tastes, keeping a troop of private gladiators, and thinking of hiring them out, to our notions, is a curious combination of character; but the taste was not essentially more brutal than the prize-ring and the cock-fights of the last century.

II. PÆTUS.

Another of Cicero's favourite correspondents was Papirius Pætus, who seems to have lived at home at ease, and taken little part in the political tumults of

his day. Like Atticus, he was an Epicurean, and thought more of the pleasures of life than of its cares and duties. Yet Cicero evidently took great pleasure in his society, and his letters to him are written in the same familiar and genial tone as those to his old school-fellow. Some of them throw a pleasant light upon the social habits of the day. Cicero had had some friends staying with him at his country-seat at Tusculum, to whom, he says, he had been giving lessons in oratory. Dolabella, his son-in-law, and Hirtius, the future consul, were among them. "They are my scholars in declamation, and I am theirs in dinner-eating; for I conclude you have heard (you seem to hear everything) that they come to me to declaim, and I go to them for dinners. 'Tis all very well for you to swear that you cannot entertain me in such grand fashion as I am used to, but it is of use. . . . Better be victimised by your friend than by your debtors, as you have been. After all, I don't require such a banquet as leaves a great waste behind it; a little will do, only handsomely served and well cooked. I remember your telling me about a dinner of Phamea's—well, it need not be such a late affair as that, nor so grand in other respects; nay, if you persist in giving me one of your mother's old family dinners, I can stand even that. My new reputation for good living has reached you, I find, before my arrival, and you are alarmed at it; but, pray, put no trust in your ante-courses—I have given up that altogether. I used to spoil my appetite, I remember, upon your oil and sliced sausages. . . . One expense I really shall put you to; I must

have my warm bath. My other habits, I assure you, are quite unaltered ; all the rest is joke."

Pætus seems to answer him with the same good-humoured badinage. Balbus, the governor of Africa, had been to see him, he says, and *he* had been content with such humble fare as he feared Cicero might despise. So much, at least, we may gather from Cicero's answer.

"Satirical as ever, I see. You say Balbus was content with very modest fare. You seem to insinuate that when grandees are so moderate, much more ought a poor ex-consul like myself so to be. You don't know that I fished it all out of your visitor himself, for he came straight to my house on his landing. The very first words I said to him were, 'How did you get on with our friend Pætus?' He swore he had never been better entertained. If this referred to the charms of your conversation, remember, I shall be quite as appreciative a listener as Balbus ; but if it meant the good things on the table, I must beg you will not treat us men of eloquence worse than you do a 'Lisper.' " *

They carry on this banter through several letters. Cicero regrets that he has been unable as yet to pay his threatened visit, when his friend would have seen what advances he had made in gastronomic science. He was able now to eat through the whole bill of fare—"from the eggs to the *roti*."

"I [Stoic that used to be] have gone over with my whole forces into the camp of Epicurus. You will

* One of Cicero's puns. Balbus means 'Lisper.'

have to do with a man who can eat, and who knows what's what. You know how conceited we late learners are, as the proverb says. You will have to unlearn those little 'plain dinners' and makeshifts of yours. We have made such advances in the art, that we have been venturing to invite, more than once, your friends Verrius and Camillus (what elegant and fastidious gentlemen they are!). But see how audacious we are getting! I have even given Hirtius a dinner—but without a peacock. My cook could imitate nothing in his entertainments except the hot soup."

Then he hears that his friend is in bed with the gout.

"I am extremely sorry to hear it, as in duty bound; still, I am quite determined to come, that I may see you, and pay my visit,—yes, and have my dinner: for I suppose your cook has not got the gout as well."

Such were the playful epistles of a busy man. But even in some of these lightest effusions we see the cares of the statesman showing through. Here is a portion of a later letter to the same friend.

"I am very much concerned to hear you have given up going out to dinner; for it is depriving yourself of a great source of enjoyment and gratification. Then, again, I am afraid—for it is as well to speak honestly—lest you should unlearn certain old habits of yours, and forget to give your own little dinners. For if formerly, when you had good examples to imitate, you were still not much of a proficient in that way, how can I suppose you will get on now? Spurina, indeed,

when I mentioned the thing to him, and explained your previous habits, proved to demonstration that there would be danger to the highest interests of the state if you did not return to your old ways in the spring. But indeed, my good Pætus, I advise you, joking apart, to associate with good fellows, and pleasant fellows, and men who are fond of you. There is nothing better worth having in life, nothing that makes life more happy. . . . See how I employ philosophy to reconcile you to dinner-parties. Take care of your health ; and that you will best do by going out to dinner. . . . But don't imagine, as you love me, that because I write jestingly I have thrown off all anxiety about public affairs. Be assured, my dear Pætus, that I seek nothing and care for nothing, night or day, but how my country may be kept safe and free. I omit no opportunity of advising; planning, or acting. I feel in my heart that if in securing this I have to lay down my life, I shall have ended it well and honourably."

III. HIS BROTHER QUINTUS.

Between Marcus Cicero and his younger brother Quintus there existed a very sincere and cordial affection—somewhat warmer, perhaps, on the side of the elder, inasmuch as his wealth and position enabled him rather to confer than to receive kindnesses ; the rule in such cases being (so cynical philosophers tell us) that the affection is lessened rather than increased by the feeling of obligation. He almost adopted the

younger Quintus, his nephew, and had him educated with his own son ; and the two cousins received their earlier training together in one or other of Marcus Cicero's country-houses under a clever Greek freedman of his, who was an excellent scholar, and—what was less usual amongst his countrymen, unless Cicero's estimate of them does them great injustice—a very honest man, but, as the two boys complained, terribly passionate. Cicero himself, however, was the head tutor—an office for which, as he modestly writes, his Greek studies fully qualified him. Quintus Cicero behaved ill to his brother after the battle of Pharsalia, making what seem to have been very unjust accusations against him in order to pay court to Cæsar ; but they soon became friends again.

Twenty-nine of the elder Cicero's letters to his brother remain, written in terms of remarkable kindness and affection, which go far to vindicate the Roman character from a charge which has sometimes been brought against it of coldness in these family relationships. Few modern brothers, probably, would write to each other in such terms as these :—

“Afraid lest your letters bother me ? I wish you would bother me, and re-bother me, and talk to me and at me ; for what can give me more pleasure ? I swear that no muse-stricken rhymester ever reads his own last poem with more delight than I do what you write to me about matters public or private, town or country. Here now is a letter from you full of pleasant matter, but with this dash of the disagreeable in it, that you have been afraid—nay, are even now

afraid—of being troublesome to me. I could quarrel with you about it, if that were not a sin. But if I have reason to suspect anything of that sort again, I can only say that I shall always be afraid lest, when we are together, I may be troublesome to you.”

Or take, again, the pathetic apology which he makes for having avoided an interview with Quintus in those first days of his exile when he was so thoroughly unmanned :—

“My brother, my brother, my brother! Did you really fear that I was angry, because I sent off the slaves without any letter to you? And did you even think that I was unwilling to see you? I angry with you? Could I possibly be angry with you? . . . When I miss you, it is not a brother only that I miss. To me you have always been the pleasantest of companions, a son in dutiful affection, a father in counsel. What pleasure ever had I without you, or you without me?”

Quintus had accompanied Cæsar on his expedition into Britain as one of his lieutenants, and seems to have written home to his brother some notices of the country; to which the latter, towards the end of his reply, makes this allusion :—

“How delighted I was to get your letter from Britain! I had been afraid of the voyage across, afraid of the rock-bound coast of the island. The other dangers of such a campaign I do not mean to despise, but in these there is more to hope than to fear, and I have been rather anxiously expecting the result than in any real alarm about it. I see you have a

capital subject to write about. What novel scenery, what natural curiosities and remarkable places, what strange tribes and strange customs, what a campaign, and what a commander you have to describe ! I will willingly help you in the points you request ; and I will send you the verses you ask for—though it is sending ‘an owl to Athens,’* I know.”

In another letter he says, “Only give me Britain to paint with your colours and my own pencil.” But either the Britons of those days did not, after all, seem to afford sufficient interest for poem or history, or for some other reason this joint literary undertaking, which seems once to have been contemplated, was never carried out, and we have missed what would beyond doubt have been a highly interesting volume of Sketches in Britain by the brothers Cicero.

Quintus was a poet, as well as his brother—nay, a better poet, in the latter’s estimation, or at least he was polite enough to say so more than once. In quantity, at least, if not in quality, the younger must have been a formidable rival, for he wrote, as appears from one of these letters, four tragedies in fifteen days—possibly translations only from the Greek.

One of the most remarkable of all Cicero’s letters, and perhaps that which does him most credit both as a man and a statesman, is one which he wrote to his brother, who was at the time governor of Asia. Indeed, it is much more than a letter ; it is rather a grave and carefully weighed paper of instructions on the duties of such a position. It is full of sound practical

* A Greek proverb, equivalent to our ‘coals to Newcastle.’

sense, and lofty principles of statesmanship—very different from the principles which too commonly ruled the conduct of Roman governors abroad. The province which had fallen to the lot of Quintus Cicero was one of the richest belonging to the Empire, and which presented the greatest temptations and the greatest facilities for the abuse of power to selfish purposes. Though called Asia, it consisted only of the late kingdom of Pergamus, and had come under the dominion of Rome, not by conquest, as was the case with most of the provinces, but by way of legacy from Attalus, the last of its kings; who, after murdering most of his own relations, had named the Roman people as his heirs. The seat of government was at Ephesus. The population was of a very mixed character, consisting partly of true Asiatics, and partly of Asiatic Greeks, the descendants of the old colonists, and containing also a large Roman element—merchants who were there for purposes of trade, many of them bankers and money-lenders, and speculators who farmed the imperial taxes, and were by no means scrupulous in the matter of fleecing the provincials. These latter—the ‘Publicani,’ as they were termed—might prove very dangerous enemies to any too zealous reformer. If the Roman governor there really wished to do his duty, what with the combined servility and double-dealing of the Orientals, the proverbial lying of the Greeks, and the grasping injustice of the Roman officials, he had a very difficult part to play. How Quintus had been playing it is not quite clear. His brother, in this admirable letter, assumes that he had

done all that was right, and urges him to maintain the same course. But the advice would hardly have been needed if all had gone well hitherto.

“You will find little trouble in holding your subordinates in check, if you can but keep a check upon yourself. So long as you resist gain, and pleasure, and all other temptations, as I am sure you do, I cannot fancy there will be any danger of your not being able to check a dishonest merchant or an extortionate collector. For even the Greeks, when they see you living thus, will look upon you as some hero from their old annals, or some supernatural being from heaven, come down into their province.

“I write thus, not to urge you so to act, but that you may congratulate yourself upon having so acted, now and heretofore. For it is a glorious thing for a man to have held a government for three years in Asia, in such sort that neither statue, nor painting, nor work of art of any kind, nor any temptations of wealth or beauty (in all which temptations your province abounds) could draw you from the strictest integrity and self-control: that your official progresses should have been no cause of dread to the inhabitants, that none should be impoverished by your requisitions, none terrified at the news of your approach;—but that you should have brought with you, wherever you came, the most hearty rejoicings, public and private, inasmuch as every town saw in you a protector and not a tyrant—every family received you as a guest, not as a plunderer.

“But in these points, as experience has by this time taught you, it is not enough for you to have these

virtues yourself, but you must look to it carefully, that in this guardianship of the province not you alone, but every officer under you, discharges his duty to our subjects, to our fellow-citizens, and to the state. . . . If any of your subordinates seem grasping for his own interest, you may venture to bear with him so long as he merely neglects the rules by which he ought to be personally bound; never so far as to allow him to abuse for his own gain the power with which you have intrusted him to maintain the dignity of his office. For I do not think it well, especially since the customs of official life incline so much of late to laxity and corrupt influence, that you should scrutinise too closely every abuse, or criticise too strictly every one of your officers, but rather place trust in each in proportion as you feel confidence in his integrity.

“For those whom the state has assigned you as companions and assistants in public business, you are answerable only within the limits I have just laid down; but for those whom you have chosen to associate with yourself as members of your private establishment and personal suite, you will be held responsible not only for all they do, but for all they say. . . .

“Your ears should be supposed to hear only what you publicly listen to, not to be open to every secret and false whisper for the sake of private gain. Your official seal should be not as a mere common tool, but as though it were yourself; not the instrument of other men’s wills, but the evidence of your own. Your officers should be the agents of your clemency, not of their own caprice; and the rods and axes which they bear

should be the emblems of your dignity, not merely of your power. In short, the whole province should feel that the persons, the families, the reputation, and the fortunes of all over whom you rule, are held by you very precious. Let it be well understood that you will hold that man as much your enemy who gives a bribe, if it comes to your knowledge, as the man who receives it. But no one will offer bribes, if this be once made clear, that those who pretend to have influence of this kind with you have no power, after all, to gain any favour for others at your hands.

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“Let such, then, be the foundations of your dignity;—first, integrity and self-control on your own part; a becoming behaviour on the part of all about you; a very careful and circumspect selection of your intimates, whether Greeks or provincials; a grave and firm discipline maintained throughout your household. For if such conduct befits us in our private and everyday relations, it becomes wellnigh godlike in a government of such extent, in a state of morals so depraved, and in a province which presents so many temptations. Such a line of conduct and such rules will alone enable you to uphold that severity in your decisions and decrees which you have employed in some cases, and by which we have incurred (and I cannot regret it) the jealousy of certain interested parties. . . . You may safely use the utmost strictness in the administration of justice, so long as it is not capricious or partial, but maintained at the same level for all. Yet it will be of little use that your own decisions be just and carefully

weighed, unless the same course be pursued by all to whom you delegate any portion of your judicial authority. Such firmness and dignity must be employed as may not only be above partiality, but above the suspicion of it. To this must be added readiness to give audience, calmness in deciding, care in weighing the merits of the case and in satisfying the claims of the parties."

Yet he advises that justice should be tempered with leniency.

"If such moderation be popular at Rome, where there is so much self-assertion, such unbridled freedom, so much licence allowed to all men;—where there are so many courts of appeal open, so many means of help, where the people have so much power and the Senate so much authority; how grateful beyond measure will moderation be in the governor of Asia, a province where all that vast number of our fellow-citizens and subjects, all those numerous states and cities, hang upon one man's nod! where there is no appeal to the tribune, no remedy at law, no Senate, no popular assembly. Wherefore it should be the aim of a great man, and one noble by nature and trained by education and liberal studies, so to behave himself in the exercise of that absolute power, as that they over whom he presides should never have cause to wish for any authority other than his."

IV. TIRO.

Of all Cicero's correspondence, his letters to Tiro supply the most convincing evidence of his natural

kindness of heart. Tiro was a slave ; but this must be taken with some explanation. The slaves in a household like Cicero's would vary in position from the lowest menial to the important major-domo and the confidential secretary. Tiro was of this higher class. He had probably been born and brought up in the service, like Eliezer in the household of Abraham, and had become, like him, the trusted agent of his master and the friend of the whole family. He was evidently a person of considerable ability and accomplishments, acting as literary amanuensis, and indeed in some sort as a domestic critic, to his busy master. He had accompanied him to his government in Cilicia, and on the return home had been taken ill, and obliged to be left behind at Patræ. And this is Cicero's affectionate letter to him, written from Leucas (Santa Maura) the day afterwards :—

“ I thought I could have borne the separation from you better, but it is plainly impossible ; and although it is of great importance to the honours which I am expecting * that I should get to Rome as soon as possible, yet I feel I made a great mistake in leaving you behind. But as it seemed to be your wish not to make the voyage until your health was restored, I approved your decision. Nor do I think otherwise now, if you are still of the same opinion. But if hereafter, when you are able to eat as usual, you think you can follow me here, it is for you to decide. I sent

* The triumph for the victory gained under his nominal command over the hill-tribes in Cilicia, during his governorship of that province (p. 68).

Mario to you, telling him either to join me with you as soon as possible, or, if you are delayed, to come back here at once. But be assured of this, that if it can be so without risk to your health, there is nothing I wish so much as to have you with me. Only, if you feel it necessary for your recovery to stay a little longer at Patræ, there is nothing I wish so much as for you to get well. If you sail at once, you will catch us at Leucas. But if you want to get well first, take care to secure pleasant companions, fine weather, and a good ship. Mind this, my good Tiro, if you love me—let neither Mario's visit nor this letter hurry you. By doing what is best for your own health, you will be best obeying my directions. Consider these points with your usual good sense. I miss you very much; but then I love you, and my affection makes me wish to see you well, just as my want of you makes me long to see you as soon as possible. But the first point is the most important. Above all, therefore, take care to get well: of all your innumerable services to me, this will be the most acceptable."

Cicero writes to him continually during his own journey homewards with the most thoughtful kindness, begs that he will be cautious as to what vessel he sails in, and recommends specially one very careful captain. He has left a horse and a mule ready for him when he lands at Brundisium. Then he hears that Tiro had been foolish enough to go to a concert, or something of the kind, before he was strong, for which he mildly reproves him. He has written to the physician to spare no care or pains, and to charge,

apparently, what he pleases. Several of his letters to his friend Atticus, at this date, speak in the most anxious and affectionate terms of the serious illness of this faithful servant. Just as he and his party are starting from Leucas, they send a note "from Cicero and his son, and Quintus the elder and younger, to their best and kindest Tiro." Then from Rome comes a letter in the name of the whole family, wife and daughter included :—

" Marcus Tullius Cicero, and Cicero the younger, and Terentia, and Tullia, and Brother Quintus, and Quintus's Son, to Tiro send greeting.

" Although I miss your able and willing service every moment, still it is not on my own account so much as yours that I am sorry you are not well. But as your illness has now taken the form of a quartan fever (for so Curius writes), I hope, if you take care of yourself, you will soon be stronger. Only be sure, if you have any kindness for me, not to trouble yourself about anything else just now, except how to get well as soon as may be. I am quite aware how much you regret not being with me ; but everything will go right if you get well. I would not have you hurry, or undergo the annoyance of sea-sickness while you are weak, or risk a sea-voyage in winter." Then he tells him all the news from Rome ; how there had been quite an ovation on his arrival there ; how Cæsar was (he thought) growing dangerous to the state ; and how his own coveted "triumph" was still postponed. "All this," he says, "I thought you would like to

know." Then he concludes : "Over and over again, I beg you to take care to get well, and to send me a letter whenever you have an opportunity. Farewell, again and again."

Tiro got well, and outlived his kind master, who, very soon after this, presented him with his freedom. It is to him that we are said to be indebted for the preservation and publication of Cicero's correspondence. He wrote, also, a biography of him, which Plutarch had seen, and of which he probably made use in his own 'Life of Cicero,' but which has not come down to us.

There was another of his household for whom Cicero had the same affection. This was Sositheus, also a slave, but a man, like Tiro, of some considerable education, whom he employed as his reader. His death affected Cicero quite as the loss of a friend. Indeed, his anxiety is such, that his Roman dignity is almost ashamed of it. "I grieve," he says, "more than I ought for a mere slave." Just as one might now apologise for making too much fuss about a favourite dog ; for the slave was looked upon in scarcely a higher light in civilised Rome. They spoke of him in the neuter gender, as a chattel ; and it was gravely discussed, in case of danger in a storm at sea, which it would be right first to cast overboard to lighten the ship, a valuable horse or an indifferent slave. Hortensius, the rival advocate who has been mentioned, a man of more luxurious habits and less kindly spirit than Cicero, who was said to feed the pet lampreys in his stews much better than he did his

slaves, and to have shed tears at the death of one of these ugly favourites, would have probably laughed at Cicero's concern for Sositheus and Tiro.

But indeed every glimpse of this kind which Cicero's correspondence affords us gives token of a kindly heart, and makes us long to know something more. Some have suspected him of a want of filial affection, owing to a somewhat abrupt and curt announcement in a letter to Atticus of his father's death; and his stanch defenders propose to adopt, with Madvig, the reading, *discessit* — "left us," instead of *decessit* — "died." There really seems no occasion. Unless Atticus knew the father intimately, there was no need to dilate upon the old man's death; and Cicero mentions subsequently, in terms quite as brief, the marriage of his daughter and the birth of his son—events in which we are assured he felt deeply interested. If any further explanation of this seeming coldness be required, the following remarks of Mr Forsyth are apposite and true:—

"The truth is, that what we call *sentiment* was almost unknown to the ancient Romans, in whose writings it would be as vain to look for it as to look for traces of Gothic architecture amongst classic ruins. And this is something more than a mere illustration. It suggests a reason for the absence. Romance and sentiment came from the dark forests of the North, when Scandinavia and Germany poured forth their hordes to subdue and people the Roman Empire. The life of a citizen of the Republic of Rome was essentially a public life. The love of country was there carried to an extravagant length, and was paramount to, and almost swallowed up, the private and social affections. The state was everything, the individual com-

paratively nothing. In one of the letters of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius to Fronto, there is a passage in which he says that the Roman language had no word corresponding with the Greek *φιλостοργία*, — the affectionate love for parents and children. Upon this Niebuhr remarks that the feeling was ‘not a Roman one ; but Cicero possessed it in a degree which few Romans could comprehend, and hence he was laughed at for the grief which he felt at the death of his daughter Tullia.’”

CHAPTER X.

ESSAYS ON 'OLD AGE' AND 'FRIENDSHIP.'

THE treatise on 'Old Age,' which is thrown into the form of a dialogue, is said to have been suggested by the opening of Plato's 'Republic,' in which Cephalus touches so pleasantly on the enjoyments peculiar to that time of life. So far as light and graceful treatment of his subject goes, the Roman essayist at least does not fall short of his model. Montaigne said of it, that "it made one long to grow old;" * but Montaigne was a Frenchman, and such sentiment was quite in his way. The dialogue, whether it produce this effect on many readers or not, is very pleasant reading: and when we remember that the author wrote it when he was exactly in his grand climacteric, and addressed it to his friend Atticus, who was within a year of the same age, we get that element of personal interest which makes all writings of the kind more attractive. The argument in defence of the paradox that it is a good thing to grow old, proceeds upon the only possible ground, the theory of compensations. It

* "Il donne l'appetit de vieillir."

is put into the mouth of Cato the Censor, who had died about a century before, and who is introduced as giving a kind of lecture on the subject to his young friends Scipio and Lælius, in his eighty-fourth year. He was certainly a remarkable example in his own case of its being possible to grow old gracefully and usefully, if, as he tells us, he was at that age still able to take part in the debates in the Senate, was busy collecting materials for the early history of Rome, had quite lately begun the study of Greek, could enjoy a country dinner-party, and had been thinking of taking lessons in playing on the lyre.

He states four reasons why old age is so commonly considered miserable. First, it unfits us for active employment; secondly, it weakens the bodily strength; thirdly, it deprives us of nearly all pleasures; fourthly and lastly, it is drawing near death. As to the first, the old senator argues very fairly that very much of the more important business of life is not only transacted by old men, but in point of fact, as is confessed by the very name and composition of the Roman Senate, it is thought safest to intrust it to the elders in the state. The pilot at the helm may not be able to climb the mast and run up and down the deck like the younger sailor, but he steers none the worse for being old. He quotes some well-known examples of this from Roman annals; examples which might be matched by obvious instances in modern English history. The defence which he makes of old age against the second charge—loss of muscular vigour—is rather more of the nature of special pleading. He says little more than

that mere muscular strength, after all, is not much wanted for our happiness : that there are always comparative degrees of strength; and that an old man need no more make himself unhappy because he has not the strength of a young man, than the latter does because he has not the strength of a bull or an elephant. It was very well for the great wrestler Milo to be able to carry an ox round the arena on his shoulders; but, on the whole, a man does not often want to walk about with a bullock on his back. The old are said, too, to lose their memory. Cato thinks they can remember pretty well all that they care to remember. They are not apt to forget who owes them money; and "I never knew an old man forget," he says, "where he had buried his gold." Then as to the pleasures of the senses, which age undoubtedly diminishes our power of enjoying. "This," says Cato, "is really a privilege, not a deprivation; to be delivered from the yoke of such tyrants as our passions—to feel that we have 'got our discharge' from such a warfare—is a blessing for which men ought rather to be grateful to their advancing years." And the respect and authority which is by general consent conceded to old age, is a pleasure more than equivalent to the vanished pleasures of youth.

There is one consideration which the author has not placed amongst his four chief disadvantages of growing old,—which, however, he did not forget, for he notices it incidentally in the dialogue,—the feeling that we are growing less agreeable to our friends, that our company is less sought after, and that we are, in short,

becoming rather ciphers in society. This, in a condition of high civilisation, is really perhaps felt by most of us as the hardest to bear of all the ills to which old age is liable. We should not care so much about the younger generation rising up and making us look old, if we did not feel that they are "pushing us from our stools." Cato admits that he had heard some old men complain that "they were now neglected by those who had once courted their society," and he quotes a passage from the comic poet Cæcilius :—

"This is the bitterest pang in growing old,—
To feel that we grow hateful to our fellows."

But he dismisses the question briefly in his own case by observing with some complacency that he does not think his young friends find *his* company disagreeable—an assertion which Scipio and Lælius, who occasionally take part in the dialogue, are far too well bred to contradict. He remarks also, sensibly enough, that though some old persons are no doubt considered disagreeable company, this is in great measure their own fault: that testiness and ill-nature (qualities which, as he observes, do not usually improve with age) are always disagreeable, and that such persons attributed to their advancing years what was in truth the consequence of their unamiable tempers. It is not all wine which turns sour with age, nor yet all tempers; much depends on the original quality. The old Censor lays down some maxims which, like the preceding, have served as texts for a good many modern writers, and may be found expanded, diluted, or

strengthened, in the essays of Addison and Johnson, and in many of their followers of less repute. "I never could assent," says Cato, "to that ancient and much-bepraised proverb,—that 'you must become an old man early, if you wish to be an old man long.'" Yet it was a maxim which was very much acted upon by modern Englishmen a generation or two back. It was then thought almost a moral duty to retire into old age, and to assume all its disabilities as well as its privileges, after sixty years or even earlier. At present the world sides with Cato, and rushes perhaps into the other extreme ; for any line at which old age now begins would be hard to trace either in dress or deportment. "We must resist old age, and fight against it as a disease." Strong words from the old Roman ; but, undoubtedly, so long as we stop short of the attempt to affect juvenility, Cato is right. We should keep ourselves as young as possible. He speaks shrewd sense, again, when he says—"As I like to see a young man who has something old about him, so I like to see an old man in whom there remains something of the youth : and he who follows this maxim may become an old man in body, but never in heart." "What a blessing it is," says Southey, "to have a boy's heart !" Do we not all know these charming old people, to whom the young take almost as heartily as to their own equals in age, who are the favourite consultees in all amusements, the confidants in all troubles ?

Cato is made to place a great part of his own enjoyment, in these latter years of his, in the cultivation of

his farm and garden (he had written, we must remember, a treatise '*De Re Rustica*,'—a kind of Roman '*Book of the Farm*,' which we have still remaining). He is enthusiastic in his description of the pleasures of a country gentleman's life, and, like a good farmer, as no doubt he was, becomes eloquent upon the grand subject of manures. Gardening is a pursuit which he holds in equal honour—that "purest of human pleasures," as Bacon calls it. On the subject of the country life generally he confesses an inclination to become garrulous—the one failing which he admits may be fairly laid to the charge of old age. The picture of the way of living of a Roman gentleman-farmer, as he draws it, must have presented a strong contrast with the artificial city-life of Rome.

"Where the master of the house is a good and careful manager, his wine-cellar, his oil-stores, his larder, are always well stocked; there is a fulness throughout the whole establishment; pigs, kids, lambs, poultry, milk, cheese, honey,—all are in abundance. The produce of the garden is always equal, as our country-folk say, to a second course. And all these good things acquire a double relish from the voluntary labours of fowling and the chase. What need to dwell upon the charm of the green fields, the well-ordered plantations, the beauty of the vineyards and olive-groves? In short, nothing can be more luxuriant in produce, or more delightful to the eye, than a well-cultivated estate; and, to the enjoyment of this, old age is so far from being any hindrance, that it rather invites and allures us to such pursuits."

He has no patience with what has been called the despondency of old age—the feeling, natural enough at that time of life, but not desirable to be encouraged, that there is no longer any room for hope or promise in the future which gives so much of its interest to the present. He will not listen to the poet when he says again—

“He plants the tree that shall not see the fruit.”

The answer which he would make has been often put into other and more elaborate language, but has a simple grandeur of its own. “If any should ask the aged cultivator for whom he plants, let him not hesitate to make this reply,—‘For the immortal gods, who, as they willed me to inherit these possessions from my forefathers, so would have me hand them on to those that shall come after.’”

The old Roman had not the horror of country society which so many civilised Englishmen either have or affect. “I like a talk,” he says, “over a cup of wine.” “Even when I am down at my Sabine estate, I daily make one at a party of my country neighbours, and we prolong our conversation very frequently far into the night.” The words are put into Cato’s mouth, but the voice is the well-known voice of Cicero. We find him here, as in his letters, persuading himself into the belief that the secret of happiness is to be found in the retirement of the country. And his genial and social nature beams through it all. We are reminded of his half-serious complaints to Atticus * of his importunate visitors at Formiæ, the dinner-parties which he was, as

* See p. 44.

we say now, "obliged to go to," and which he so evidently enjoyed.*

He is careful, however, to remind his readers that old age, to be really either happy or venerable, must not be the old age of the mere voluptuary or the debauchee; that the grey head, in order to be, even in his pagan sense, "a crown of glory," must have been "found in the way of righteousness." Shakespeare might have learned from Cicero in these points the moral which he puts into the mouth of his Adam—

"Therefore mine age is as a lusty winter,
Frosty but kindly."

It is a miserable old age, says the Roman, which is obliged to appeal to its grey hairs as its only claim to the respect of its juniors. "Neither hoar hairs nor wrinkles can arrogate reverence as their right. It is the life whose opening years have been honourably spent which reaps the reward of reverence at its close."

In discussing the last of the evils which accompany old age, the near approach of death, Cicero rises to something higher than his usual level. His Cato will not have death to be an evil at all; it is to him the escaping from "the prison of the body,"—the "getting the sight of land at last after a long voyage, and coming into port." Nay, he does not admit that death is

* "A clergyman was complaining of the want of society in the country where he lived, and said, 'They talk of *runts*' (*i.e.*, young cows). 'Sir,' said Mr Salusbury, 'Mr Johnson would learn to talk of runts;' meaning that I was a man who would make the most of my situation, whatever it was."—Boswell's Life. Cicero was like Dr Johnson.

death. "I have never been able to persuade myself," he says, quoting the words of Cyrus in Xenophon, "that our spirits were alive while they were in these mortal bodies, and died only when they departed out of them; or that the spirit then only becomes void of sense when it escapes from a senseless body; but that rather when freed from all admixture of corporality, it is pure and uncontaminated, then it most truly has sense." "I am fully persuaded," he says to his young listeners, "that your two fathers, my old and dearly-loved friends, are living now, and living that life which only is worthy to be so called." And he winds up the dialogue with the very beautiful apostrophe, one of the last utterances of the philosopher's heart, well known, yet not too well known to be here quoted—

"It likes me not to mourn over departing life, as many men, and men of learning, have done. Nor can I regret that I have lived, since I have so lived that I may trust I was not born in vain; and I depart out of life as out of a temporary lodging, not as out of my home. For nature has given it to us as an inn to tarry at by the way, not as a place to abide in. O glorious day! when I shall set out to join that blessed company and assembly of disembodied spirits, and quit this crowd and rabble of life! For I shall go my way, not only to those great men of whom I spoke, but to my own son Cato, than whom was never better man born, nor more full of dutiful affection; whose body I laid on the funeral pile—an office he should rather have done for me.* But his spirit has never left

* Burke touches the same key in speaking of his son: "I

me ; it still looks fondly back upon me, though it has gone assuredly into those abodes where he knew that I myself should follow. And this my great loss I seemed to bear with calmness ; not that I bore it undisturbed, but that I still consoled myself with the thought that the separation between us could not be for long. And if I err in this—in that I believe the spirits of men to be immortal—I err willingly ; nor would I have this mistaken belief of mine uprooted so long as I shall live. But if, after I am dead, I shall have no consciousness, as some curious philosophers assert, then I am not afraid of dead philosophers laughing at my mistake.”

The essay on 'Friendship' is dedicated by the author to Atticus—an appropriate recognition, as he says, of the long and intimate friendship which had existed between themselves. It is thrown, like the other, into the form of a dialogue. The principal speaker here is one of the listeners in the former case—Lælius, surnamed the Wise—who is introduced as receiving a visit from his two sons-in-law, Fannius and Scævola (the great lawyer before mentioned*), soon after the sudden death of his great friend, the younger Scipio Africanus. Lælius takes the occasion, at the request of the young men, to give them his views and opinions on the subject of Friendship generally. This essay is per-

live in an inverted order. They who ought to have succeeded me have gone before me : they who should have been to me as posterity are in the place of ancestors.”

* P. 6.

haps more original than that upon 'Old Age,' but certainly is not so attractive to a modern reader. Its great merit is the grace and polish of the language; but the arguments brought forward to prove what an excellent thing it is for a man to have good friends, and plenty of them, in this world, and the rules for his behaviour towards them, seem to us somewhat trite and commonplace, whatever might have been their effect upon a Roman reader.

Cicero is indebted to the Greek philosophers for the main outlines of his theory of friendship, though his acquaintance with the works of Plato and Aristotle was probably exceedingly superficial. He holds, with them, that man is a social animal; that "we are so constituted by nature that there must be some degree of association between us all, growing closer in proportion as we are brought into more intimate relations one with another." So that the social bond is a matter of instinct, not of calculation; not a cold commercial contract of profit and loss, of giving and receiving, but the fulfilment of one of the yearnings of our nature. Here he is in full accordance with the teaching of Aristotle, who, of all the various kinds of friendship to which he allows the common name, pronounces that which is founded merely upon interest—upon mutual interchange, by tacit agreement, of certain benefits—to be the least worthy of such a designation. Friendship is defined by Cicero to be "the perfect accord upon all questions, religious and social, together with mutual goodwill and affection." This "perfect accord," it must be confessed, is a very large requirement. He follows his Greek

masters again in holding that true friendship can exist only amongst the good ; that, in fact, all friendship must assume that there is something good and lovable in the person towards whom the feeling is entertained : it may occasionally be a mistaken assumption ; the good quality we think we see in our friend may have no existence save in our own partial imagination ; but the existence of the counterfeit is an incontestable evidence of the true original. And the greatest attraction, and therefore the truest friendships, will always be of the good towards the good.

He admits, however, the notorious fact, that good persons are sometimes disagreeable ; and he confesses that we have a right to seek in our friends amiability as well as moral excellence. "Sweetness," he says—anticipating, as all these ancients so provokingly do, some of our most modern popular philosophers—"sweetness, both in language and in manner, is a very powerful attraction in the formation of friendships." He is by no means of the same opinion as Sisyphus in Lord Lytton's 'Tale of Miletus'—

"Now, then, I know thou really art my friend,—

None but true friends choose such unpleasant words."

He admits that it is the office of a friend to tell unpleasant truths sometimes ; but there should be a certain amount of this indispensable "sweetness" to temper the bitterness of the advice. There are some friends who are continually reminding you of what they have done for you—"a disgusting set of people verily they are," says our author. And there are others

who are always thinking themselves slighted; "in which case there is generally something of which they are conscious in themselves, as laying them open to contemptuous treatment."

Cicero's own character displays itself in this short treatise. Here, as everywhere, he is the politician. He shows a true appreciation of the duties and the qualifications of a true friend; but his own thoughts are running upon political friendships. Just as when, in many of his letters, he talks about "all honest men," he means "our party;" so here, when he talks of friends, he cannot help showing that it was of the essence of friendship, in his view, to hold the same political opinions, and that one great use of friends was that a man should not be isolated, as he had sometimes feared he was, in his political course. When he puts forward the old instances of Coriolanus and Gracchus, and discusses the question whether their "friends" were or were not bound to aid them in their treasonable designs against the state, he was surely thinking of the factions of his own times, and the troublesome brotherhoods which had gathered round Catiline and Clodius. Be this as it may, the advice which he makes Lælius give to his younger relatives is good for all ages, modern or ancient: "There is nothing in this world more valuable than friendship." "Next to the immediate blessing and providence of Almighty God," Lord Clarendon was often heard to say, "I owe all the little I know, and the little good that is in me, to the friendships and conversation I have still been used to, of the most excellent men in their several kinds that lived in that age."

CHAPTER XI.

CICERO'S PHILOSOPHY.

'THE TRUE ENDS OF LIFE.'*

PHILOSOPHY was to the Roman what religion is to us. It professed to answer, so far as it might be answered, Pilate's question, "What is truth?" or to teach men, as Cicero described it, "the knowledge of things human and divine." Hence the philosopher invests his subject with all attributes of dignity. To him Philosophy brings all blessings in her train. She is the guide of life, the medicine for his sorrows, "the fountain-head of all perfect eloquence—the mother of all good deeds and good words." He invokes with affectionate reverence the great name of Socrates—the sage who had "first drawn wisdom down from heaven."

No man ever approached his subject more richly laden with philosophic lore than Cicero. Snatching every leisure moment that he could from a busy life, he devotes it to the study of the great minds of former ages. Indeed, he held this study to be the duty of

* 'De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum.'

the perfect orator; a knowledge of the human mind was one of his essential qualifications. Nor could he conceive of real eloquence without it; for his definition of eloquence is, "wisdom speaking fluently."* But such studies were also suited to his own natural tastes. And as years passed on, and he grew weary of civil discords and was harassed by domestic troubles, the great orator turns his back upon the noisy city, and takes his parchments of Plato and Aristotle to be the friends of his councils and the companions of his solitude, seeking by their light to discover Truth, which Democritus had declared to be buried in the depths of the sea.

Yet, after all, he professes to do little more than translate. So conscious is he that it is to Greece that Rome is indebted for all her literature, and so conscious, also, on the part of his countrymen, of what he terms "an arrogant disdain for everything national," that he apologises to his readers for writing for the million in their mother-tongue. Yet he is not content, as he says, to be "a mere interpreter." He thought that by an eclectic process—adopting and rearranging such of the doctrines of his Greek masters as approved themselves to his own judgment—he might make his own work a substitute for theirs. His ambition is to achieve what he might well regard as the hardest of tasks—a popular treatise on philosophy; and he has certainly succeeded. He makes no pretence to originality; all he can do is, as he expresses it, "to array Plato in a Latin dress," and "present this stranger

* "Copiose loquens sapientia."

from beyond the seas with the freedom of his native city." And so this treatise on the Ends of Life—a grave question even to the most careless thinker—is, from the nature of the case, both dramatic and rhetorical. Representatives of the two great schools of philosophy—the Stoics and Epicureans—plead and counterplead in his pages, each in their turn; and their arguments are based on principles broad and universal enough to be valid even now. For now, as then, men are inevitably separated into two classes—amiable men of ease, who guide their conduct by the rudder-strings of pleasure—who for the most part "leave the world" (as has been finely said) "in the world's debt, having consumed much and produced nothing;"* or, on the other hand, zealous men of duty,—

"Who scorn delights and live laborious days,"

and act according to the dictates of their honour or their conscience. In practice, if not in theory, a man must be either Stoic or Epicurean.

Each school, in this dialogue, is allowed to plead its own cause. "Listen" (says the Epicurean) "to the voice of nature that bids you pursue pleasure, and do not be misled by that vulgar conception of pleasure as mere sensual enjoyment; our opponents misrepresent us when they say that we advocate this as the highest good; we hold, on the contrary, that men often obtain the greatest pleasure by neglecting this baser kind. Your highest instances of martyrdom—of Decii devoting themselves for their country, of consuls

* Lord Derby.

putting their sons to death to preserve discipline—are not disinterested acts of sacrifice, but the choice of a present pain in order to procure a future pleasure. Vice is but ignorance of real enjoyment. Temperance alone can bring peace of mind ; and the wicked, even if they escape public censure, ‘are racked night and day by the anxieties sent upon them by the immortal gods.’ We do not, in this, contradict your Stoic ; we, too, affirm that only the wise man is really happy. Happiness is as impossible for a mind distracted by passions, as for a city divided by contending factions. The terrors of death haunt the guilty wretch, ‘who finds out too late that he has devoted himself to money or power or glory to no purpose.’ But the wise man’s life is unalloyed happiness. Rejoicing in a clear conscience, ‘he remembers the past with gratitude, enjoys the blessings of the present, and disregards the future.’ Thus the moral to be drawn is that which Horace (himself, as he expresses it, ‘one of the litter of Epicurus’) impresses on his fair friend Leuconœ :—

‘Strain your wine, and prove your wisdom ; life is short ;
should hope be more ?

In the moment of our talking envious time has slipped
away.

Seize the present, trust to-morrow e’en as little as you may.’”

Passing on to the second book of the treatise, we hear the advocate of the counter-doctrine. Why, exclaims the Stoic, introduce Pleasure to the councils of Virtue ? Why uphold a theory so dangerous in practice ? Your Epicurean soon turns Epicure, and a class

of men start up who have never seen the sun rise or set, who squander fortunes on cooks and perfumers, on costly plate and gorgeous rooms, and ransack sea and land for delicacies to supply their feasts. Epicurus gives his disciples a dangerous discretion in their choice. There is no harm in luxury (he tells us) provided it be free from inordinate desires. But who is to fix the limit to such vague concessions?

Nay, more, he degrades men to the level of the brute creation. In his view, there is nothing admirable beyond this pleasure—no sensation or emotion of the mind, no soundness or health of body. And what is this pleasure which he makes of such high account? How short-lived while it lasts! how ignoble when we recall it afterwards! But even the common feeling and sentiments of men condemn so selfish a doctrine. We are naturally led to uphold truth and abhor deceit, to admire Regulus in his tortures, and to despise a lifetime of inglorious ease. And then follows a passage which echoes the stirring lines of Scott—

“Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.”

Do not then (concludes the Stoic) take good words in your mouth, and prate before applauding citizens of honour, duty, and so forth, while you make your private lives a mere selfish calculation of expediency. We were surely born for nobler ends than this, and none

who is worthy the name of a man would subscribe to doctrines which destroy all honour and all chivalry. The heroes of old time won their immortality not by weighing pleasures and pains in the balance, but by being prodigal of their lives, doing and enduring all things for the sake of their fellow-men.

The opening scene in the third book is as lively and dramatic as (what was no doubt the writer's model) the introduction of a Platonic dialogue. Cicero has walked across from his Tusculan villa to borrow some manuscripts from the well-stocked library of his young friend Lucullus*—a youth whose high promise was sadly cut short, for he was killed at Philippi, when he was not more than twenty-three. There, "gorging himself with books," Cicero finds Marcus Cato—a Stoic of the Stoics—who expounds in a high tone the principles of his sect.

Honour he declares to be the rule, and "life according to nature" the end of man's existence. And wrong and injustice are more really contrary to this nature than either death, or poverty, or bodily suffering, or any other outward evil.† Stoics and Peripatetics are agreed at least on one point—that bodily pleasures fade into nothing before the splendours of virtue, and that to compare the two is like holding a candle against the sunlight, or setting a drop of

* See p. 43.

† So Bishop Butler, in the preface to his *Sermons upon 'Human Nature,'* says they were "intended to explain what is meant by the nature of man, when it is said that virtue consists in following, and vice in deviating from it."

brine against the waves of the ocean. Your Epicurean would have each man live in selfish isolation, engrossed in his private pleasures and pursuits. We, on the other hand, maintain that “Divine Providence has appointed the world to be a common city for men and gods,” and each one of us to be a part of this vast social system. And thus every man has his lot and place in life, and should take for his guidance those golden rules of ancient times—“Obey God; know thyself; shun excess.” Then, rising to enthusiasm, the philosopher concludes: “Who cannot but admire the incredible beauty of such a system of morality? What character in history or in fiction can be grander or more consistent than the ‘wise man’ of the Stoics? All the riches and glory of the world are his, for he alone can make a right use of all things. He is ‘free,’ though he be bound by chains; ‘rich,’ though in the midst of poverty; ‘beautiful,’ for the mind is fairer than the body; ‘a king,’ for, unlike the tyrants of the world, he is lord of himself; ‘happy,’ for he has no need of Solon’s warning to ‘wait till the end,’ since a life virtuously spent is a perpetual happiness.”

In the fourth book, Cicero himself proceeds to vindicate the wisdom of the ancients—the old Academic school of Socrates and his pupils—against what he considers the novelties of Stoicism. All that the Stoics have said has been said a hundred times before by Plato and Aristotle, but in nobler language. They merely “pick out the thorns” and “lay bare the bones” of previous systems, using newfangled terms and misty arguments with a “vainglorious parade.” Their fine

talk about citizens of the world and the ideal wise man is rather poetry than philosophy. They rightly connect happiness with virtue, and virtue with wisdom; but so did Aristotle some centuries before them.

But their great fault (says Cicero) is, that they ignore the practical side of life. So broad is the line which they draw between the "wise" and "foolish," that they would deny to Plato himself the possession of wisdom. They take no account of the thousand circumstances which go to form our happiness. To a spiritual being, virtue *might* be the chief good; but in actual life our physical is closely bound up with our mental enjoyment, and pain is one of those stern facts before which all theories are powerless. Again, by their fondness for paradox, they reduce all offences to the same dead level. It is, in their eyes, as impious to beat a slave as to beat a parent: because, as they say, "nothing can be *more* virtuous than virtue,—nothing *more* vicious than vice." And lastly, this stubbornness of opinion affects their personal character. They too often degenerate into austere critics and bitter partisans, and go far to banish from among us love, friendship, gratitude, and all the fair humanities of life.

The fifth book carries us back some twenty years, when we find Cicero once more at Athens, taking his afternoon walk among the deserted groves of the Academy. With him are his brother Quintus, his cousin Lucius, and his friends Piso and Atticus. The scene, with its historic associations, irresistibly carries their minds back to those illustrious spirits who had

once made the place their own. Among these trees Plato himself had walked ; under the shadow of that Porch Zeno had lectured to his disciples ;* yonder Quintus points out the "white peak of Colonus," described by Sophocles in "those sweetest lines ;" while glistening on the horizon were the waves of the Phaleric harbour, which Demosthenes, Cicero's own great prototype, had outvoiced with the thunder of his declamation. So countless, indeed, are the memories of the past called up by the genius of the place, that (as one of the friends remarks) "wherever we plant our feet, we tread upon some history." Then Piso, speaking at Cicero's request, begs his friends to turn from the degenerate thinkers of their own day to those giants of philosophy, from whose writings all liberal learning, all history, and all elegance of language may be derived. More than all, they should turn to the leader of the Peripatetics, Aristotle, who seemed (like Lord Bacon after him) to have taken all knowledge as his portion. From these, if from no other source, we may learn the secret of a happy life. But first we must settle what this 'chief good' is—this end and object of our efforts—and not be carried to and fro, like ships without a steersman, by every blast of doctrine.

* The Stoics took their name from the 'stoa,' or portico in the Academy, where they *sat* at lecture, as the Peripatetics (the school of Aristotle) from the little knot of listeners who followed their master as he *walked*. Epicurus's school were known as the philosophers of 'the Garden,' from the place where he taught. The 'Old Academy' were the disciples of Plato ; the 'New Academy' (to whose tenets Cicero inclined) revived the great principle of Socrates—of affirming nothing.

If Epicurus was wrong in placing Happiness

“In corporal pleasure and in careless ease,”

no less wrong are they who say that “honour” requires pleasure to be added to it, since they thus make honour itself dishonourable. And again, to say with others that happiness is tranquillity of mind, is simply to beg the question.

Putting, then, all such theories aside, we bring the argument to a practical issue. Self-preservation is the first great principle of nature; and so strong is this instinctive love of life both among men and animals, that we see even the iron-hearted Stoic shrink from the actual pangs of a voluntary death. Then comes the question, What is this nature that is so precious to each of us? Clearly it is compounded of body and mind, each with many virtues of its own; but as the mind should rule the body, so reason, as the dominant faculty, should rule the mind. Virtue itself is only “the perfection of this reason,” and, call it what you will, genius or intellect is something divine.

Furthermore, there is in man a gradual progress of reason, growing with his growth until it has reached perfection. Even in the infant there are “as it were sparks of virtue”—half-unconscious principles of love and gratitude; and these germs bear fruit, as the child develops into the man. We have also an instinct which attracts us towards the pursuit of wisdom; such is the true meaning of the Sirens’ voices in the *Odyssey*, says the philosopher, quoting from the poet of all time:—

“Turn thy swift keel and listen to our lay;
Since never pilgrim to these regions came,
But heard our sweet voice ere he sailed away,
And in his joy passed on, with ampler mind.” *

It is wisdom, not pleasure, which they offer. Hence it is that men devote their days and nights to literature, without a thought of any gain that may accrue from it; and philosophers paint the serene delights of a life of contemplation in the islands of the blest.

Again, our minds can never rest. “Desire for action grows with us;” and in action of some sort, be it politics or science, life (if it is to be life at all) must be passed by each of us. Even the gambler must ply the dice-box, and the man of pleasure seek excitement in society. But in the true life of action, still the ruling principle should be honour.

Such, in brief, is Piso’s (or rather Cicero’s) vindication of the old masters of philosophy. Before they leave the place, Cicero fires a parting shot at the Stoic paradox that the ‘wise man’ is always happy. How, he pertinently asks, can one in sickness and poverty, blind, or childless, in exile or in torture, be possibly called happy, except by a monstrous perversion of language? †

Here, somewhat abruptly, the dialogue closes; and Cicero pronounces no judgment of his own, but leaves the great question almost as perplexed as when he

* Odyss. xii. 185 (Worsley).

† In a little treatise called “Paradoxes,” Cicero discusses six of these scholastic quibbles of the Stoics.

started the discussion. But, of the two antagonistic theories, he leans rather to the Stoic than to the Epicurean. Self-sacrifice and honour seem, to his view, to present a higher ideal than pleasure or expediency.

II. 'ACADEMIC QUESTIONS.'

Fragments of two editions of this work have come down to us; for almost before the first copy had reached the hands of his friend Atticus, to whom it was sent, Cicero had rewritten the whole on an enlarged scale. The first book (as we have it now) is dedicated to Varro, a noble patron of art and literature. In his villa at Cumæ were spacious porticoes and gardens, and a library with galleries and cabinets open to all comers. Here, on a terrace looking seawards, Cicero, Atticus, and Varro himself pass a long afternoon in discussing the relative merits of the old and new Academies; and hence we get the title of the work. Varro takes the lion's share of the first dialogue, and shows how from the "vast and varied genius of Plato" both Academics and Peripatetics drew all their philosophy, whether it related to morals, to nature, or to logic. Stoicism receives a passing notice, as also does what Varro considers the heresy of Theophrastus, who strips virtue of all its beauty, by denying that happiness depends upon it.

The second book is dedicated to another illustrious name, the elder Lucullus, not long deceased—half-statesman, half-dilettante, "with almost as divine a memory for facts," says Cicero, with something of envy,

"as Hortensius had for words." This time it is at his villa, near Tusculum, amidst scenery perhaps even now the loveliest of all Italian landscapes, that the philosophic dialogue takes place. Lucullus condemns the scepticism of the New Academy—those reactionists against the dogmatism of past times, who disbelieve their very eyesight. If (he says) we reject the testimony of the senses, there is neither body, nor truth, nor argument, nor anything certain left us. These perpetual doubters destroy every ground of our belief.

Cicero ingeniously defends this scepticism, which was, in fact, the bent of his own mind. After all, what is our eyesight worth? The ship sailing across the bay yonder seems to move, but to the sailors it is the shore that recedes from their view. Even the sun, "which mathematicians affirm to be eighteen times larger than the earth, looks but a foot in diameter." And as it is with these things, so it is with all knowledge. Bold indeed must be the man who can define the point at which belief passes into certainty. Even the "fine frenzy" of the poet, his pictures of gods and heroes, are as lifelike to himself and to his hearers as though he actually saw them ;—

"See how Apollo, fair-haired god,
Draws in and bends his golden bow,
While on the left fair Dian waves her torch."

No—we are sure of nothing ; and we are happy if, like Socrates, we only know this—that we know nothing. Then, as if in irony, or partly influenced perhaps by the advocate's love of arguing the case both ways, Cicero

demolishes that grand argument of design which elsewhere he so carefully constructs,* and reasons in the very language of materialism: "You assert that all the universe could not have been so ingeniously made without some godlike wisdom, the majesty of which you trace down even to the perfection of bees and ants. Why, then, did the Deity, when he made everything for the sake of man, make such a variety (for instance) of venomous reptiles? Your divine soul is a fiction; it is better to imagine that creation is the result of the laws of nature, and so release the Deity from a great deal of hard work, and me from fear; for which of us, when he thinks that he is an object of divine care, can help feeling an awe of the divine power day and night? But we do not understand even our own bodies; how, then, can we have an eyesight so piercing as to penetrate the mysteries of heaven and earth?"

The treatise, however, is but a disappointing fragment, and the argument is incomplete.

III. THE 'TUSCULAN DISPUTATIONS.'

The scene of this dialogue is Cicero's villa at Tusculum. There, in his long gallery, he walks and discusses with his friends the vexed questions of morality. Was death an evil? Was the soul immortal? How could a man best bear pain and the other miseries of life? Was virtue any guarantee for happiness?

Then, as now, death was the great problem of humanity—"to die and go we know not where." The

* See p. 168.

old belief in Elysium and Tartarus had died away ; as Cicero himself boldly puts it in another place, such things were no longer even old wives' fables. Either death brought an absolute unconsciousness, or the soul soared into space. "*Lex non pœna mors*"—"Death is a law, not a penalty"—was the ancient saying. It was, as it were, the close of a banquet or the fall of the curtain. "While we are, death is not ; when death has come, we are not."

Cicero brings forward the testimony of past ages to prove that death is not a mere annihilation. Man cannot perish utterly. Heroes are deified ; and the spirits of the dead return to us in visions of the night. Somehow or other (he says) there clings to our minds a certain presage of future ages ; and so we plant, that our children may reap ; we toil, that others may enter into our labours ; and it is this life after death, the desire to live in men's mouths for ever, which inspires the patriot and the martyr. Fame to the Roman, even more than to us, was "the last infirmity of noble minds." It was so in a special degree to Cicero. The instinctive sense of immortality, he argues, is strong within us ; and as, in the words of the English poet,

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,"

so also in death, the Roman said, though in other words—

"Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither."

Believe not then, says Cicero, those old wives' tales, those poetic legends, the terrors of a material hell, or

the joys of a sensual paradise. Rather hold with Plato that the soul is an eternal principle of life, which has neither beginning nor end of existence ; for if it were not so, heaven and earth would be overset, and all nature would stand at gaze. "Men say they cannot conceive or comprehend what the soul can be, distinct from the body. As if, forsooth, they could comprehend what it is, when it is *in* the body,—its conformation, its magnitude, or its position there. . . . To me, when I consider the nature of the soul, there is far more difficulty and obscurity in forming a conception of what the soul is while in the body,—in a dwelling where it seems so little at home,—than of what it will be when it has escaped into the free atmosphere of heaven, which seems its natural abode." * And as the poet seems to us inspired, as the gifts of memory and eloquence seem divine, so is the soul itself, in its simple essence, a god dwelling in the breast of each of us. What else can be this power which enables us to recollect the past, to foresee the future, to understand the present?

There follows a passage on the argument from design which anticipates that fine saying of Voltaire—"Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer ; mais toute la nature crie qu'il existe." "The heavens," says even the heathen philosopher, "declare the glory of God." Look on the sun and the stars ; look on the alternation of the seasons, and the changes of day and night ; look again at the earth bringing forth her fruits for the use of men ; the multitude of cattle ; and man himself,

* I. c. 22.

made as it were to contemplate and adore the heavens and the gods. Look on all these things, and doubt not that there is some Being, though you see him not, who has created and presides over the world.

“Imitate, therefore, the end of Socrates ; who, with the fatal cup in his hands, spoke with the serenity of one not forced to die, but, as it were, ascending into heaven ; for he thought that the souls of men, when they left the body, went by different roads ; those polluted by vice and unclean living took a road wide of that which led to the assembly of the gods ; while those who had kept themselves pure, and on earth had taken a divine life as their model, found it easy to return to those beings from whence they came.” Or learn a lesson from the swans, who, with a prophetic instinct, leave this world with joy and singing. Yet do not anticipate the time of death, “for the Deity forbids us to depart hence without his summons ; but, on just cause given (as to Socrates and Cato), gladly should we exchange our darkness for that light, and, like men not breaking prison but released by the law, leave our chains with joy, as having been discharged by God.”

The feeling of these ancients with regard to suicide, we must here remember, was very different from our own. There was no distinct idea of the sanctity of life ; no social stigma and consequent suffering were brought on the family of the suicide. Stoic and Epicurean philosophers alike upheld it as a lawful remedy against the pangs of disease, the dotage of old age, or the caprices of a tyrant. Every man might, they contended, choose .

his own route on the last great journey, and sleep well, when he grew wearied out with life's fitful fever. The door was always open (said Epictetus) when the play palled on the senses. You should quit the stage with dignity, nor drain the flask to the dregs. Some philosophers, it is true, protested against it as a mere device of cowardice to avoid pain, and as a failure in our duties as good citizens. Cicero, in one of his latest works, again quotes with approval the opinion of Pythagoras, that "no man should abandon his post in life without the orders of the Great Commander." But at Rome suicide had been glorified by a long roll of illustrious names, and the protest was made in vain.

But why, continues Cicero, why add to the miseries of life by brooding over death? Is life to any of us such unmixed pleasure even while it lasts? Which of us can tell whether he be taken away from good or from evil? As our birth is but "a sleep and a forgetting," so our death may be but a second sleep, as lasting as Endymion's. Why then call it wretched, even if we die before our natural time? Nature has lent us life, without fixing the day of payment; and uncertainty is one of the conditions of its tenure. Compare our longest life with eternity, and it is as short-lived as that of those ephemeral insects whose life is measured by a summer day; and "who, when the sun sets, have reached old age."

Let us, then, base our happiness on strength of mind, on a contempt of earthly pleasures, and on the strict observance of virtue. Let us recall the last noble words of Socrates to his judges. "The death," said

he, "to which you condemn me, I count a gain rather than a loss. Either it is a dreamless sleep that knows no waking, or it carries me where I may converse with the spirits of the illustrious dead. I go to death, *you* to life; but which of us is going the better way, God only knows."

No man, then, dies too soon who has run a course of perfect virtue; for glory follows like a shadow in the wake of such a life. Welcome death, therefore, as a blessed deliverance from evil, sent by the special favour of the gods, who thus bring us safely across a sea of troubles to an eternal haven.

The second topic which Cicero and his friends discuss is, the endurance of pain. Is it an unmixed evil? Can anything console the sufferer? Cicero at once condemns the sophistry of Epicurus. The wise man cannot pretend indifference to pain; it is enough that he endure it with courage, since, beyond all question, it is sharp, bitter, and hard to bear. And what is this courage? Partly excitement, partly the impulse of honour or of shame, partly the habituation which steels the endurance of the gladiator. Keep, therefore—this is the conclusion—stern restraint over the feminine elements of your soul, and learn not only to despise the attacks of pain, but also

"The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

From physical, the discussion naturally passes to mental, suffering. For grief, as well as for pain, he prescribes the remedy of the Stoics—*æquanimitas*—"a calm serenity of mind." The wise man, ever serene

and composed, is moved neither by pain or sorrow, by fear or desire. He is equally undisturbed by the malice of enemies or the inconstancy of fortune. But what consolation can we bring to ease the pain of the Epicurean? "Put a nosegay to his nostrils—burn perfumes before him—crown him with roses and woodbine!" But perfumes and garlands can do little in such case; pleasures may divert, but they can scarcely console.

Again, the Cyrenaics bring at the best but Job's comfort. No man will bear his misfortunes the more lightly by bethinking himself that they are unavoidable—that others have suffered before him—that pain is part and parcel of the ills which flesh is heir to. Why grieve at all? Why feed your misfortune by dwelling on it? Plunge rather into active life and forget it, remembering that excessive lamentation over the trivial accidents of humanity is alike unmanly and unnecessary. And as it is with grief, so it is with envy, lust, anger, and those other "perturbations of the mind" which the Stoic Zeno rightly declares to be "repugnant to reason and nature." From such disquietudes it is the wise man who is free.

The fifth and last book discusses the great question, Is virtue of itself sufficient to make life happy? The bold conclusion is, that it is sufficient. Cicero is not content with the timid qualifications adopted by the school of the Peripatetics, who say one moment that external advantages and worldly prosperity are nothing, and then again admit that, though man may be happy without them, he is happier with them,—which is

making the real happiness imperfect after all. Men differ in their views of life. As in the great Olympic games, the throng are attracted, some by desire of gain, some by the crown of wild olive, some merely by the spectacle; so, in the race of life, we are all slaves to some ruling idea, it may be glory, or money, or wisdom. But they alone can be pronounced happy whose minds are like some tranquil sea—"alarmed by no fears, wasted by no griefs, inflamed by no lusts, enervated by no relaxing pleasures,—and such serenity virtue alone can produce."

These 'Disputations' have always been highly admired. But their popularity was greater in times when Cicero's Greek originals were less read or understood. Erasmus carried his admiration of this treatise to enthusiasm. "I cannot doubt," he says, "but that the mind from which such teaching flowed was inspired in some sort by divinity."

IV. THE TREATISE 'ON MORAL DUTIES.'

The treatise 'De Officiis,' known as Cicero's 'Offices,' to which we pass next, is addressed by the author to his son, while studying at Athens under Cratippus; possibly in imitation of Aristotle, who inscribed his Ethics to his son Nicomachus. It is a treatise on the duties of a gentleman—"the noblest present," says a modern writer, "ever made by parent to a child."* Written in a far higher tone than Lord Chesterfield's letters, though treating of the same sub-

* Kelsall.

ject, it proposes and answers multifarious questions which must occur continually to the modern Christian as well as to the ancient philosopher. "What makes an action right or wrong? What is a duty? What is expediency? How shall I learn to choose between my principles and my interests? And lastly (a point of casuistry which must sometimes perplex the strictest conscience), of two 'things honest,'* which is most so?"

The key-note of his discourse throughout is Honour; and the word seems to carry with it that magic force which Burke attributed to chivalry—"the unbought grace of life—the nurse of heroic sentiment and manly enterprise." *Noblesse oblige*,—and there is no state of life, says Cicero, without its obligations. In their due discharge consists all the nobility, and in their neglect all the disgrace, of character. There should be no selfish devotion to private interests. We are born not for ourselves only, but for our kindred and fatherland. We owe duties not only to those who have benefited but to those who have wronged us. We should render to all their due; and justice is due even to the lowest of mankind: what, for instance (he says with a hardness which jars upon our better feelings), can be lower than a slave? Honour is that "unbought grace" which adds a lustre to every action. In society it produces

* The English "Honesty" and "Honour" alike fail to convey the full force of the Latin *honestus*. The word expresses a progress of thought from comeliness and grace of person to a noble and graceful character—all whose works are done in honesty and honour.

courtesy of manners ; in business, under the form of truth, it establishes public credit. Again, as equity, it smooths the harsh features of the law. In war it produces that moderation and good faith between contending armies which are the surest basis of a lasting peace. And so in honour are centred the elements of all the virtues—wisdom and justice, fortitude and temperance ; and “if,” he says, reproducing the noble words of Plato, as applied by him to Wisdom, “this ‘Honour’ could but be seen in her full beauty by mortal eyes, the whole world would fall in love with her.”

Such is the general spirit of this treatise, of which only the briefest sketch can be given in these pages.

Cicero bases honour on our inherent excellence of nature, paying the same noble tribute to humanity as Kant some centuries after : “On earth there is nothing great but man ; in man there is nothing great but mind.” Truth is a law of our nature. Man is only “lower than the angels ;” and to him belong prerogatives which mark him off from the brute creation—the faculties of reason and discernment, the sense of beauty, and the love of law and order. And from this arises that fellow-feeling which, in one sense, “makes the whole world kin”—the spirit of Terence’s famous line, which Cicero notices (applauded on its recitation, as Augustin tells us, by the cheers of the entire audience in the theatre)—

“Homo sum—humani nihil a me alienum puto ;” *

* “I am a man—I hold that nothing which concerns mankind can be matter of unconcern to me.”

for (he continues) "all men by nature love one another, and desire an intercourse of words and action." Hence spring the family affections, friendship, and social ties; hence also that general love of combination, which forms a striking feature of the present age, resulting in clubs, trades-unions, companies, and generally in what Mr Carlyle terms "swarmery."

Next to truth, justice is the great duty of mankind. Cicero at once condemns "communism" in matters of property. Ancient immemorial seizure, conquest, or compact, may give a title; but "no man can say that he has anything his own by a right of nature." Injustice springs from avarice or ambition, the thirst of riches or of empire, and is the more dangerous as it appears in the more exalted spirits, causing a dissolution of all ties and obligations. And here he takes occasion to instance "that late most shameless attempt of Cæsar's to make himself master of Rome."

There is, besides, an injustice of omission. You may wrong your neighbour by seeing him wronged without interfering. Cicero takes the opportunity of protesting strongly against the selfish policy of those lovers of ease and peace, who, "from a desire of furthering their own interests, or else from a churlish temper, profess that they mind nobody's business but their own, in order that they may seem to be men of strict integrity and to injure none," and thus shrink from taking their part in "the fellowship of life." He would have had small patience with our modern doctrine of non-intervention and neutrality in nations any more than in men. Such conduct arises (he says)

from the false logic with which men cheat their conscience ; arguing reversely, that whatever is the best policy is—honesty.

There are two ways, it must be remembered, in which one man may injure another—force and fraud ; but as the lion is a nobler creature than the fox, so open violence seems less odious than secret villany. No character is so justly hateful as

“ A rogue in grain,
Veneered with sanctimonious theory.”

Nations have their obligations as well as individuals, and war has its laws as well as peace. The struggle should be carried on in a generous temper, and not in the spirit of extermination, when “ it has sometimes seemed a question between two hostile nations, not which should remain a conqueror, but which should remain a nation at all.”

No mean part of justice consists in liberality, and this, too, has its duties. It is an important question, how, and when, and to whom, we should give ? It is possible to be generous at another person's expense : it is possible to injure the recipient by mistimed liberality ; or to ruin one's fortune by open house and prodigal hospitality. A great man's bounty (as he says in another place) should be a common sanctuary for the needy. “ To ransom captives and enrich the meaner folk is a nobler form of generosity than providing wild beasts or shows of gladiators to amuse the mob.” Charity should begin at home ; for relations

and friends hold the first place in our affections ; but the circle of our good deeds is not to be narrowed by the ties of blood, or sect, or party, and "our country comprehends the endearments of all." We should act in the spirit of the ancient law—"Thou shalt keep no man from the running stream, or from lighting his torch at thy hearth." Our liberality should be really liberal,—like that charity which Jeremy Taylor describes as "friendship to all the world."

Another component principle of this honour is courage, or "greatness of soul," which (continues Cicero) has been well defined by the Stoics as "a virtue contending for justice and honesty;" and its noblest form is a generous contempt for ordinary objects of ambition, not "from a vain or fantastic humour, but from solid principles of reason." The lowest and commoner form of courage is the mere animal virtue of the fighting-cock.

But a character should not only be excellent,—it should be graceful. In gesture and deportment men should strive to acquire that dignified grace of manners "which adds as it were a lustre to our lives." They should avoid affectation and eccentricity ; "not to care a farthing what people think of us is a sign not so much of pride as of immodesty." The want of tact—the saying and doing things at the wrong time and place—produces the same discord in society as a false note in music ; and harmony of character is of more consequence than harmony of sounds. There is a grace in words as well as in conduct : we should

avoid unseasonable jests, "and not lard our talk with Greek quotations." *

In the path of life, each should follow the bent of his own genius, so far as it is innocent—

"Honour and shame from no condition rise ;
Act well your part—there all the honour lies."

Nothing is so difficult (says Cicero) as the choice of a profession, inasmuch as "the choice has commonly to be made when the judgment is weakest." Some tread in their father's steps, others beat out a fresh line of their own ; and (he adds, perhaps not without a personal reference) this is generally the case with those born of mean parents, who propose to carve their own way in the world. But the *parvenu* of Arpinum—the 'new man,' as aristocratic jealousy always loved to call him—is by no means insensible to the true honours of ancestry. "The noblest inheritance," he says, "that can ever be left by a father to his son, far excelling that of lands and houses, is the fame of his virtues and glorious actions ;" and saddest of all sights is that of a noble house dragged through the mire by some degenerate descendant, so as to be a by-word among the populace,—"which may" (he concludes) "be justly said of but too many in our times."

The Roman's view of the comparative dignity of professions and occupations is interesting, because his prejudices (if they be prejudices) have so long main-

* This last precept Cicero must have considered did not apply to letter-writing, otherwise he was a notorious offender against his own rule.

tained their ground amongst us moderns. Tax-gatherers and usurers are as unpopular now as ever—the latter very deservedly so. Retail trade is despicable, we are told, and “all mechanics are by their profession mean.” Especially such trades as minister to mere appetite or luxury—butchers, fishmongers, and cooks; perfumers, dancers, and suchlike. But medicine, architecture, education, farming, and even wholesale business, especially importation and exportation, are the professions of a gentleman. “But if the merchant, satisfied with his profits, shall leave the seas and from the harbour step into a landed estate, such a man seems justly deserving of praise.” We seem to be reading the verdict of modern English society delivered by anticipation two thousand years ago.

The section ends with earnest advice to all, that they should put their principles into practice. “The deepest knowledge of nature is but a poor and imperfect business, unless it proceeds into action. As justice consists in no abstract theory, but in upholding society among men,—as “greatness of soul itself, if it be isolated from the duties of social life, is but a kind of uncouth churlishness,”—so it is each citizen’s duty to leave his philosophic seclusion of a cloister, and take his place in public life, if the times demand it, “though he be able to number the stars and measure out the world.”

The same practical vein is continued in the next book. What, after all, are a man’s real interests? what line of conduct will best advance the main end of his life? Generally, men make the fatal mistake of assuming that honour must always clash with their interests;

while in reality, says Cicero, "they would obtain their ends best, not by knavery and underhand dealing, but by justice and integrity." The right is identical with the expedient. "The way to secure the favour of the gods is by upright dealing; and next to the gods, nothing contributes so much to men's happiness as men themselves." It is labour and co-operation which have given us all the goods which we possess.

Since, then, man is the best friend to man, and also his most formidable enemy, an important question to be discussed is the secret of influence and popularity—"the art of winning men's affections." For to govern by bribes or by force is not really to govern at all; and no obedience based on fear can be lasting—"no force of power can bear up long against a current of public hate." Adventurers who ride rough-shod over law (he is thinking again of Cæsar) have but a short-lived reign; and "liberty, when she has been chained up a while, bites harder when let loose than if she had never been chained at all."* Most happy was that just and moderate government of Rome in earlier times, when she was "the port and refuge for princes and nations in their hour of need." Three requisites go to form that popular character which has a just influence over others; we must win men's love, we must deserve their confi-

* It is curious to note how, throughout the whole of this argument, Cicero, whether consciously or unconsciously, works upon the principle that the highest life is the political life, and that the highest object a man can set before him is the obtaining, by legitimate means, influence and authority amongst his fellow-citizens.

dence, and we must inspire them with an admiration for our abilities. The shortest and most direct road to real influence is that which Socrates recommends—"for a man to be that which he wishes men to take him for."*

Then follow some maxims which show how thoroughly conservative was the policy of our philosopher. The security of property he holds to be the security of the state. There must be no playing with vested rights, no unequal taxation, no attempt to bring all things to a level, no cancelling of debts and redistribution of land (he is thinking of the baits held out by Catiline), none of those traditional devices for winning favour with the people, which tend to destroy that social concord and unity which make a commonwealth. "What reason is there," he asks, "why, when I have bought, built, repaired, and laid out much money, another shall come and enjoy the fruits of it?"

And as a man should be careful of the interests of the social body, so he should be of his own. But Cicero feels that in descending to such questions he is somewhat losing sight of his dignity as a moralist. "You will find all this thoroughly discussed," he says to his son, "in Xenophon's *Œconomics*—a book which, when I was just your age, I translated from the Greek into Latin." [One wonders whether young Marcus took the hint.] "And if you want instruction in money matters, there are gentlemen sitting on the

* "Not being less but more than all
The gentleness he seemed to be."

—Tennyson : 'In Memoriam.'

Exchange who will teach you much better than the philosophers."

The last book opens with a saying of the elder Cato's, which Cicero much admires, though he says modestly that he was never able in his own case quite to realise it—"I am never less idle than when I am idle, and never less alone than when alone." Retirement and solitude are excellent things, Cicero always declares; generally contriving at the same time to make it plain, as he does here, that his own heart is in the world of public life. But at least it gives him time for writing. He "has written more in this short time, since the fall of the Commonwealth, than in all the years during which it stood."

He here resolves the question, If honour and interest seem to clash, which is to give way? Or rather, it has been resolved already; if the right be always the expedient, the opposition is seeming, not real. He puts a great many questions of casuistry, but it all amounts to this: the good man keeps his oath, "though it were to his own hindrance." But it is never to his hindrance; for a violation of his conscience would be the greatest hindrance of all.

In this treatise, more than in any of his other philosophical works, Cicero inclines to the teaching of the Stoics. In the others, he is rather the seeker after truth than the maintainer of a system. His is the critical eclecticism of the 'New Academy'—the spirit so prevalent in our own day, which fights against the shackles of dogmatism. And with all his respect for the nobler side of Stoicism, he is fully alive to its de-

fects ; though it was not given to him to see, as Milton saw after him, the point wherein that great system really failed—the “philosophic pride” which was the besetting sin of all disciples in the school, from Cato to Seneca :—

“ Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,
 * * * * * *
 Much of the soul they talk, but all awry ;
 And in themselves seek virtue, and to themselves
 All glory arrogate,—to God give none ;
 Rather accuse Him under usual names,
 Fortune, or Fate, as one regardless quite
 Of mortal things.” *

Yet, in spite of this, such men were as the salt of the earth in a corrupt age ; and as we find, throughout the more modern pages of history, great preachers denouncing wickedness in high places,—Bourdaloue and Massillon pouring their eloquence into the heedless ears of Louis XIV. and his courtiers—Sherlock and Tillotson declaiming from the pulpit in such stirring accents that “even the indolent Charles roused himself to listen, and the fastidious Buckingham forgot to sneer”†—so, too, do we find these “monks of heathendom,” as the Stoics have been not unfairly called, protesting in their day against that selfish profligacy which was fast sapping all morality in the Roman empire. No doubt (as Mr Lecky takes care to tell us), their high principles were not always consistent with their practice (alas ! whose are ?) ; Cato may have ill-used his slaves, Sallust may have been rapacious, and

* Paradise Regained.

† Macaulay.

Seneca wanting in personal courage. Yet it was surely something to have set up a noble ideal, though they might not attain to it themselves, and in "that hideous carnival of vice" to have kept themselves, so far as they might, unspotted from the world. Certain it is that no other ancient sect ever came so near the light of revelation. Passages from Seneca, from Epictetus, from Marcus Aurelius, sound even now like fragments of the inspired writings. The Unknown God, whom they ignorantly worshipped as the Soul or Reason of the World, is—in spite of Milton's strictures—the beginning and the end of their philosophy. Let us listen for a moment to their language. "Prayer should be only for the good." "Men should act according to the spirit, and not according to the letter of their faith." "Wouldest thou propitiate the gods? Be good: he has worshipped them sufficiently who has imitated them." It was from a Stoic poet, Aratus, that St Paul quoted the great truth which was the rational argument against idolatry—"For we are also His offspring, and " (so the original passage concludes) "we alone possess a voice, which is the image of reason." It is in another poet of the same school that we find what are perhaps the noblest lines in all Latin poetry. Persius concludes his Satire on the common hypocrisy of those prayers and offerings to the gods which were but a service of the lips and hands, in words of which an English rendering may give the sense but not the beauty:—"Nay, then, let us offer to the gods that which the debauched sons of great Messala can never bring on their broad chargers,

—a soul wherein the laws of God and man are blended,—a heart pure to its inmost depths,—a breast ingrained with a noble sense of honour. Let me but bring these with me to the altar, and I care not though my offering be a handful of corn.” With these grand words, fit precursors of a purer creed to come, we may take our leave of the Stoics, remarking how thoroughly, even in their majestic egotism, they represented the moral force of the nation among whom they flourished ; a nation, says a modern preacher, “whose legendary and historic heroes could thrust their hand into the flame, and see it consumed without a nerve shrinking ; or come from captivity on parole, advise their countrymen against a peace, and then go back to torture and certain death ; or devote themselves by solemn self-sacrifice like the Decii. The world must bow before such men ; for, unconsciously, here was a form of the spirit of the Cross—self-surrender, unconquerable fidelity to duty, sacrifice for others.” *

* F. W. Robertson, Sermons, i. 218.

Portions of three treatises by Cicero upon Political Philosophy have come down to us :—1. ‘De Republica’ ; a dialogue on Government, founded chiefly on the ‘Republic’ of Plato : 2. ‘De Legibus’ ; a discussion on Law in the abstract, and on national systems of legislation : 3. ‘De Jure Civili’ ; of which last only a few fragments exist. His historical works have all perished.

CHAPTER XII.

CICERO'S RELIGION.

It is difficult to separate Cicero's religion from his philosophy. In both he was a sceptic, but in the better sense of the word. His search after truth was in no sneering or incredulous spirit, but in that of a reverent inquirer. We must remember, in justice to him, that an earnest-minded man in his day could hardly take higher ground than that of the sceptic. The old polytheism was dying out in everything but in name, and there was nothing to take its place.

His religious belief, so far as we can gather it, was rather negative than positive. In the speculative treatise which he has left us, 'On the Nature of the Gods,' he examines all the current creeds of the day, but leaves his own quite undefined.

The treatise takes the form, like the rest, of an imaginary conversation. This is supposed to have taken place at the house of Aurelius Cotta, then Pontifex Maximus—an office which answered nearly to that of Minister of religion. The other speakers are Balbus, Velleius, and Cicero himself,—who acts, however,

rather in the character of moderator than of disputant. The debate is still, as in the more strictly philosophical dialogues, between the different schools. Velleius first sets forth the doctrine of his master Epicurus; speaking about the gods, says one of his opponents, with as much apparent intimate knowledge "as if he had just come straight down from heaven." All the speculations of previous philosophers—which he reviews one after the other—are, he assures the company, palpable errors. The popular mythology is a mere collection of fables. Plato and the Stoics, with their Soul of the world and their pervading Providence, are entirely wrong; the disciples of Epicurus alone are right. There are gods; that much, the universal belief of mankind in all ages sufficiently establishes. But that they should be the laborious beings which the common systems of theology would make them,—that they should employ themselves in the manufacture of worlds,—is manifestly absurd. Some of this argument is ingenious. "What should induce the Deity to perform the functions of an *Ædile*, to light up and decorate the world? If it was to supply better accommodation for himself, then he must have dwelt of choice, up to that time, in the darkness of a dungeon. If such improvements gave him pleasure, why should he have chosen to be without them so long?"

No—the gods are immortal and happy beings; and these very attributes imply that they should be wholly free from the cares of business—exempt from labour, as from pain and death. They are in human form, but of an ethereal and subtile essence, incapable of our

passions or desires. Happy in their own perfect wisdom and virtue, they

“Sit beside their nectar, careless of mankind.”

Cotta—speaking in behalf of the New Academy—controverts these views. Be these your gods, Epicurus? as well say there are no gods at all. What reverence, what love, or what fear can men have of beings who neither wish them, nor can work them, good or ill? Is idleness the divinest life? “Why, ’tis the very heaven of schoolboys; yet the schoolboys, on their holiday, employ themselves in games.” Nay, he concludes, what the Stoic Posidonius said of your master Epicurus is true—“He believed there were no gods, and what he said about their nature he said only to avoid popular odium.” He could not believe that the Deity has the outward shape of a man, without any solid essence; that he has all the members of a man, without the power to use them; that he is a shadowy transparent being, who shows no favour and confers no benefits on any, cares for nothing and does nothing; this is to allow his existence of the gods in word, but to deny it in fact.

Velleius compliments his opponent on his clever argument, but desires that Balbus would state his views upon the question. The Stoic consents; and, at some length, proceeds to prove (what neither disputant has at all denied) the existence of Divine beings of some kind. Universal belief, well-authenticated instances of their appearance to men, and of the fulfilment of prophecies and omens, are all evi-

dences of their existence. He dwells much, too, on the argument from design, of which so much use has been made by modern theologians. He furnishes Paley with the idea for his well-known illustration of the man who finds a watch; "when we see a dial or a water-clock, we believe that the hour is shown thereon by art, and not by chance." * He gives also an illustration from the poet Attius, which from a poetical imagination has since become an historical incident; the shepherds who see the ship *Argo* approaching take the new monster for a thing of life, as the Mexicans regarded the ships of Cortes. Much more, he argues, does the harmonious order of the world bespeak an intelligence within. But his conclusion is that the Universe itself is the Deity; or that the Deity is the animating Spirit of the Universe; and that the popular mythology, which gives one god to the Earth, one to the Sea, one to Fire, and so on, is in fact a distorted version of this truth. The very form of the universe—the sphere—is the most perfect of all forms, and therefore suited to embody the Divine.

Then Cotta—who though, as Pontifex, he is a national priest by vocation, is of that sect in philosophy which makes doubt its creed—resumes his objections. He is no better satisfied with the tenets of the Stoics than with those of the Epicureans. He believes that there are gods; but, coming to the discussion as a dispassionate and philosophical observer, he finds such proofs as are offered of their existence insufficient. But this third book is fragmentary, and

* *De Nat. Deor.* ii. 34. Paley's *Nat. Theol.* ch. i.

the continuity of Cotta's argument is broken by considerable gaps in all the manuscripts. There is a curious tradition, that these portions were carefully torn out by the early Christians, because they might prove too formidable weapons in the hands of unbelievers. Cotta professes throughout only to raise his objections in the hope that they may be refuted; but his whole reasoning is destructive of any belief in an overruling Providence. He confesses himself puzzled by that insoluble mystery—the existence of Evil in a world created and ruled by a beneficent Power. The gods have given man reason, it is said; but man abuses the gift to evil ends. "This is the fault," you say, "of men, not of the gods. As though the physician should complain of the virulence of the disease, or the pilot of the fury of the tempest! Though these are but mortal men, even in them it would seem ridiculous. Who would have asked your help, we should answer, if these difficulties had not arisen? May we not argue still more strongly in the case of the gods? The fault, you say, lies in the vices of men. But you should have given men such a rational faculty as would exclude the possibility of such crimes." He sees, as David did, "the ungodly in prosperity." The laws of Heaven are mocked, crimes are committed, and "the thunders of Olympian Jove are silent." He quotes, as it would always be easy to quote, examples of this from all history: the most telling and original, perhaps, is the retort of Diagoras, who was called the Atheist, when they showed him in the temple at Samothrace the votive tablets (as they

may be seen in some foreign churches now) offered by those shipwrecked seamen who had been saved from drowning. "Lo, thou that deniest a Providence, behold here how many have been saved by prayer to the gods!" "Yea," was his reply; "but where are those commemorated who were drowned?"

The Dialogue ends with no resolution of the difficulties, and no conclusion as to the points in question. Cicero, who is the narrator of the imaginary conference, gives it as his opinion that the arguments of the Stoic seemed to him to have "the greater probability." It was the great tenet of the school which he most affected, that probability was the nearest approach that man could make to speculative truth. "We are not among those," he says, "to whom there seems to be no such thing as truth; but we say that all truths have some falsehoods attached to them which have so strong a resemblance to truth, that in such cases there is no certain note of distinction which can determine our judgment and assent. The consequence of which is that there are many things probable; and although they are not subjects of actual perception to our senses, yet they have so grand and glorious an aspect that a wise man governs his life thereby." * It remained for one of our ablest and most philosophical Christian writers to prove that in such matters probability was practically equivalent to demonstration.† Cicero's own form of scepticism in religious

* De Nat. Deor. i. 5.

† "To us, probability is the very guide of life."—Introduct. to Butler's Analogy.

matters is perhaps very nearly expressed in the striking anecdote which he puts, in this dialogue, into the mouth of the Epicurean.

“If you ask me what the Deity is, or what his nature and attributes are, I should follow the example of Simonides, who, when the tyrant Hiero proposed to him the same question, asked a day to consider of it. When the king, on the next day, required from him the answer, Simonides requested two days more; and when he went on continually asking double the time, instead of giving any answer, Hiero in amazement demanded of him the reason. ‘Because,’ replied he, ‘the longer I meditate on the question, the more obscure does it appear.’”*

The position of Cicero as a statesman, and also as a member of the College of Augurs, no doubt checked any strong expression of opinion on his part as to the forms of popular worship and many particulars of popular belief. In the treatise which he intended as in some sort a sequel to this Dialogue on the ‘Nature of the Gods’—that upon ‘Divination’—he states the arguments for and against the national belief in omens, auguries, dreams, and such intimations of the Divine will.† He puts the defence of the system in the mouth of his brother Quintus, and takes himself the destructive side of the argument: but whether this was meant to give his own real views on the subject,

* De Nat. Deor. i. 22.

† There is a third treatise, ‘De Fato,’ apparently a continuation of the series, of which only a portion has reached us. It is a discussion of the difficult questions of Fate and Free-will.

we cannot be so certain. The course of argument employed on both sides would rather lead to the conclusion that the writer's opinion was very much that which Johnson delivered as to the reality of ghosts—"All argument is against it, but all belief is for it."

With regard to the great questions of the soul's immortality, and a state of future rewards and punishments, it would be quite possible to gather from Cicero's writings passages expressive of entirely contradictory views. The bent of his mind, as has been sufficiently shown, was towards doubt, and still more towards discussion ; and possibly his opinions were not so entirely in a state of flux as the remains of his writings seem to show. In a future state of some kind he must certainly have believed—that is, with such belief as he would have considered the subject-matter to admit of—as a strong probability. In a speculative fragment which has come down to us, known as 'Scipio's Dream,' we seem to have the creed of the man rather than the speculations of the philosopher. Scipio Africanus the elder appears in a dream to the younger who bore his name (his grandson by adoption). He shows him a vision of heaven ; bids him listen to the music of the spheres, which, as they move in their order, "by a modulation of high and low sounds," give forth that harmony which men have in some poor sort reduced to notation. He bids him look down upon the earth, contracted to a mere speck in the distance, and draws a lesson of the poverty of all mere earthly fame and glory. "For all those who have preserved, or

aided, or benefited their country, there is a fixed and definite place in heaven, where they shall be happy in the enjoyment of everlasting life." But "the souls of those who have given themselves up to the pleasures of sense, and made themselves, as it were, the servants of these,—who at the bidding of the lusts which wait upon pleasure have violated the laws of gods and men,—they, when they escape from the body, flit still around the earth, and never attain to these abodes but after many ages of wandering." We may gather that his creed admitted a Valhalla for the hero and the patriot, and a long process of expiation for the wicked.

There is a curious passage preserved by St Augustin from that one of Cicero's works which he most admired—the lost treatise on 'Glory' *—which seems to show that so far from being a materialist, he held the body to be a sort of purgatory for the soul.

"The mistakes and the sufferings of human life make me think sometimes that those ancient seers, or interpreters of the secrets of heaven and the counsels of the Divine mind, had some glimpse of the truth, when they said that men are born in order to suffer the penalty for some sins committed in a former life ; and that the idea is true which we find in Aristotle, that we are suffering some such punishment as theirs of old, who fell into the hands of those Etruscan bandits, and were put to death with a studied cruelty ; their living bodies being tied to dead bodies, face to face, in closest possible conjunction : that so our souls are

* See p. 29.

coupled to our bodies, united like the living with the dead."

But whatever might have been the theological side, if one may so express it, of Cicero's religion, the moral aphorisms which meet us here and there in his works have often in them a teaching which comes near the tone of Christian ethics. The words of Petrarch are hardly too strong—"You would fancy sometimes it was not a Pagan philosopher but a Christian apostle who was speaking"* These are but a few out of many which might be quoted:—"Strive ever for the truth, and so reckon as that not thou art mortal, but only this thy body; for thou art not that which this outward form of thine shows forth, but each man's mind, that is the real man—not the shape which can be traced with the finger."† "Yea, rather, they live who have escaped from the bonds of their flesh as from a prison-house." "Follow after justice and duty; such a life is the path to heaven, and into yon assembly of those who have once lived, and now, released from the body, dwell in that place." Where, in any other heathen writer, shall we find such noble words as those which close the apostrophe in the *Tusculans*?—"One single day well spent, and in accordance with thy precepts, were better to be chosen than an immortality of sin!"‡ He is addressing himself, it is true, to Philosophy; but his Philosophy is here little less than the Wisdom of Scripture: and the

* "Interdum non Paganum philosophum, sed apostolum loqui putes."

† 'The Dream of Scipio.'

‡ *Tusc.*, v. 2.

spiritual aspiration is the same—only uttered under greater difficulties—as that of the Psalmist when he exclaims, “One day in thy courts is better than a thousand !” We may or may not adopt Erasmus’s view of his inspiration—or rather, inspiration is a word which has more than one definition, and this would depend upon which definition we take ; but we may well sympathise with the old scholar when he says—“I feel a better man for reading Cicero.”

END OF CICERO.

PLINY'S LETTERS

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ADVERTISEMENT.

MANY of the translations in this volume are our own. Sometimes we have borrowed from the versions of Lord Orrery and Melmoth. Occasionally we have had the advantage, of which we beg to express our hearty appreciation, of the versions which Dean Merivale gives in his 'History of the Romans under the Empire.'

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

As this work is not arranged in a regular biographical form, it seems advisable to give a brief sketch of the main events in the life of the Author of these Letters. Most of these events the reader will find related at greater length as he proceeds.

Pliny the younger was born A.D. 62. In A.D. 79 he witnessed the great eruption of Vesuvius. In the following year he commenced practice as an advocate in Rome. For a short time he served as a military tribune in Syria. Returning to Rome, he was made Quæstor; and in A.D. 93, Prætor. In A.D. 100, he was Consul. He also filled at some time the office of Prefect of the Treasury, and he was one of the Commissioners of the Tiber. He belonged to the College of Augurs. In A.D. 103, he went as Proprætor to the province of Pontus and Bithynia, an office which he held for about two years. We know nothing of him later than the year 107. He was twice married, but left no children.



PLINY'S LETTERS.

CHAPTER I.

PLINY'S EARLY DAYS—SKETCH OF THE REIGNS OF
VESPASIAN AND TITUS—PLINY THE ELDER.

No reading can be pleasanter or more instructive than the correspondence of a clever and accomplished man, whose circumstances have brought him into continual contact with the politics and literature of his day. Cicero's letters are certainly among the most interesting remains of antiquity. Those of the younger Pliny are indeed the work of a man many degrees intellectually inferior to Cicero, but they have deservedly found many attentive readers in modern times. They throw much light on that period of transition in the history of mankind which began with the origin and rise of the Christian Church; and, as we read them, we feel that there is something in their general tone and character which makes them a sort of link between the old and new worlds.

Caius Plinius Cæcilius Secundus—such was his full Roman name—is familiarly known as “the younger Pliny,” to distinguish him from his uncle, and father by adoption, the famous naturalist. His mother, Plinia, was this uncle’s sister. His father, Caius Cæcilius, was a man of no note, but of a good old Roman stock. The Cæcilian family, though of plebeian origin, had been for centuries an honourable house, and could reckon consuls and great state officials among its scions. The most illustrious name connected with it was that of the Metelli. It was also wealthy; so that Pliny entered the world under good auspices. We have to pick out from his own letters all that can be known about him. He was, he tells us, in his eighteenth year when that memorable eruption of Vesuvius, A.D. 79, destroyed the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. He was therefore born A.D. 62, a year in which the wickedness and infamy of Nero were rising to their utmost height. Comum, now Como, on the lake of that name, was the place of his birth, as may be inferred with almost absolute certainty from various passages in his letters. His family, it would seem, had considerable estates in the neighbourhood; and their relations to the town and its inhabitants were much the same as those of a great English landowner to a borough closely connected with his property. The early death of his father was possibly the cause of his future distinction. His uncle, after the Roman fashion, adopted him as his son, and imbued him with a love of letters, and an earnest desire of entering on an honourable career. He had likewise the good

fortune to have as his guardian a truly great man—Verginius Rufus—to whom we shall have occasion to refer more at length when we come to speak of Pliny's friends. As a matter of course, the best education which the age could furnish was provided for him. He attended the lectures of the most famous teachers of the day—of Quintilian among the number. He must have been a precocious lad, as he tells us that he wrote a Greek tragedy in his fourteenth year, and that he began to practise as an advocate at nineteen. His early success was no doubt due to his remarkable industry as well as to his great social advantages.

The years of his childhood and youth were terrible and eventful for the state. The latter period of Nero's reign was an undisguised despotism, which indulged itself without restraint in freaks of senseless and capricious wickedness. The year A.D. 68 delivered the world from the last* and worst of the Cæsars. That same year witnessed a great rising in the armies of Gaul and of Lower Germany; and the empire was actually offered by the troops on the Rhine to young Pliny's guardian, Verginius Rufus. He declined it; and Servius Galba, who had been governor of one of the provinces of Spain, and was a favourite with the soldiers, became emperor. Thus was effected a complete revolution. Men chosen by the soldiers were henceforth to rule the Roman world. The secret of the

* So Suetonius terms him, as the last of the Julia gens—that is, of the family of Julius Cæsar, whether connected with it by blood or adoption. Commonly the first twelve emperors are called “the twelve Cæsars.”

empire, as Tacitus says in one of the opening chapters of his History, was now divulged,—that an emperor might be created elsewhere than at Rome. The following year was one of continuous civil war. It comprises the brief reigns of Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and is minutely described by Tacitus. It was a time of horrible bloodshed and confusion. “I am entering,” says the historian, “on a period rich in disasters, frightful in its wars, torn by civil strife, and even in peace full of horrors.” With its close, which witnessed the establishment of the Flavian dynasty, began a more hopeful era. Vespasian, the first representative of that dynasty, was called to the empire by the Roman legions in the east, to the command of which he had been appointed at the commencement of the Jewish war. A man of humble birth, he attained greatness by his energy and perseverance. He was an able general, and he retained through life the plain and straightforward character of a good soldier. His good sense and firmness enabled him to repress or mitigate some of the worst evils of the time; and his reign was on the whole a decided benefit to the Roman world.

Vespasian was Emperor from A.D. 70 to 79. During these years Pliny was diligently pursuing his studies under the direction of the best of teachers. The Emperor himself was a man of no culture or refinement, but he was shrewd enough to see that it was for the public good that men of letters should be encouraged. He had the reputation of being parsimonious to a fault, but he knew when to be munificent. He founded a public library, and liberally pensioned poets and

artists, professors of grammar and rhetoric. Quintilian, the most successful teacher of the day, rose, contrary to all precedent, to the consulship. We may well imagine what a shock it must have been to an old-fashioned Roman nobleman to see a schoolmaster raised to the highest dignity in the state. Vespasian no doubt felt that the surest way to make his government popular was to conciliate the goodwill of the men who directed the education of the Roman youth. He could do nothing with the philosophers, whose political creed, that especially of the Stoics, was a fanatical republicanism, utterly impracticable, and at the same time restless and aggressive. He was obliged to treat them as enemies who were plotting the overthrow of his government. Of the fate of Helvidius Priscus, the most eminent, perhaps also the noblest and most conscientious, of the Stoics, we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. He was banished, and soon after put to death. Then followed a wholesale expulsion from Rome of all the Stoics and Cynics ; and we may infer from several allusions to them in Juvenal that the popular sentiment, which regarded them as hypocrites and impostors, heartily approved this seemingly harsh measure. The quiet man of letters, who was content to make the best of existing political arrangements, had nothing to fear from Vespasian. Such a man as the elder Pliny was perfectly safe, and, without any loss of self-respect, could look upon the Emperor as a friend. In the year A.D. 77, he dedicated his great work on natural history to Vespasian's son and successor.

Vespasian encouraged architecture as well as letters. He adorned both Rome and the provincial cities with splendid structures. The Colosseum, the greatest building of the ancient world, was begun by him. The Temple of Peace was also his work. He spared no expense in making the capital, and the empire generally, more imposing and magnificent. His reign was peaceful and prosperous ; there were none of those commotions in Gaul, Germany, or the East which before and after his time almost seemed to threaten the Roman world with dissolution. As might have been expected from a prudent and energetic soldier, he maintained the armies of the state, which numbered about 400,000 men, in thorough efficiency. In A.D. 78, the great Julius Agricola, Tacitus's father-in-law, whom Vespasian had raised to the patrician rank, was sent to Britain, and strengthened the Roman hold on the island by the conquest of North Wales and Anglesey. In the following year the Emperor died, and was succeeded by his son Titus.

The chief event which we usually associate with the name of Titus is the capture of Jerusalem,* and the destruction of the Jewish nationality. His short reign of two years was perfectly tranquil. He was so popular an emperor that he was spoken of as "the delight of the human race." Though he had seen and himself taken part in peculiarly horrible scenes of war, there was much less of the stern soldier in him than in his father. He could win men's affections as well as gain their respect. He was lavish of money, and

* Jerusalem was taken in the month of September, A.D. 70.

was sincerely anxious to spread comfort and happiness among his subjects. The hateful class of informers who from the time of Tiberius had traded successfully on false accusations of treason, were driven out of Rome in disgrace. Like his father, he improved the capital with great public works. He completed and dedicated the Colosseum, and gave to Rome the famous baths which are called by his name. His reign, however, was not without serious disasters. The great eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79, a fire which raged uninterruptedly in Rome for three days, and was hardly less destructive than that in Nero's reign, and a pestilence which for a while, according to Eusebius, daily destroyed 10,000 of the population, followed in quick succession. In the eruption of Vesuvius perished a man who, both for his own merits and for the beneficial influence which he exercised over the mind of the young Pliny, deserves a detailed notice. To the elder Pliny we must certainly give the first place among the authors of his time. He did not, indeed, escape the weaknesses and defects which marred all the natural philosophy of the ancients, but he pursued his studies with an ardour and enthusiasm which could not fail to produce substantial results.

The nephew, we may be sure, owed much to such an uncle. In one of his letters,* of which we subjoin a translation, he describes, with evident admiration, his uncle's marvellous devotion to study. From this letter we derive our chief acquaintance with the elder Pliny's manner of life.

* Epist. iii. 5.

“It is a great pleasure to me,” he writes to his friend, Bæbius Macer, “that you are so fond of reading my uncle’s books that you wish to possess them all, and ask for a complete list of them. I will do the part of an index, and also tell you the order in which they were written, for the studious reader likes to know this. First comes a work in one volume, on the use of the dart by cavalry,—a careful and ingenious treatise, which he composed when he was in command of one of the cavalry corps of our allied troops. Two volumes of the life of Pomponius Secundus, a work which he intended as a tribute to the memory of a friend who was singularly attached to him. Wars with Germany, in twenty books; in these, he compiled a history of all our wars with the German tribes. A dream which he had when serving with the army in Germany suggested the work. Drusus Nero, whose victories in Germany were on the widest scale hitherto known, and who perished in the country, seemed to stand by him as he lay asleep, and to entreat him to rescue his memory from oblivion. The Student, in three parts, which from their length spread into six volumes: a work in which is discussed the earliest training and subsequent education of the orator. Questions of Grammar and Style, in eight books, written in the last years of Nero’s reign, when every sort of literary pursuit requiring freedom and elevation of tone was dangerous in our enslaved condition. A History of the State, in continuation of the work of Aufidius Bassus, in thirty-one books. Last comes his Natural History, in thirty-seven books; a work of vast

extent, and as various as nature itself. You wonder at a busy man having completed such a number of books—books, too, containing much abstruse matter ; you will wonder more when I tell you that for some time he was a pleader, that he died at the age of 56, and that meantime he was much hindered and distracted by important state business, and by his intimacy with our emperors. But his intellect was quick, his industry perfectly marvellous, his power of remaining awake remarkable. From the 23d of August he began to study at midnight, and through the winter he continued to rise at one, or at the latest at two in the morning, often at twelve. Sleep he could always command. Often it used to come upon him and leave him in the midst of his books. Before daybreak he would go to the Emperor, Vespasian, who also worked at night, and thence to his official duties. On returning home he gave what time remained to study. After taking a light meal, as our forefathers used to do, he would often in summer, if he had leisure, recline in the sun, and have a book read to him, on which he wrote notes, or from which he made extracts. He read nothing without making extracts, for he used to say that you could get some good from the worst book. After reading in the sun he generally had a cold bath, then a light meal and a very short nap, after which, as if he was beginning another day, he would study till dinner-time. During dinner a book was read to him, and he made notes upon it as it went on. I remember one of his friends once stopping the reader, who had pronounced a word incorrectly, and making him repeat it. My

uncle said to him, 'Did you not understand the word?' 'Yes,' he replied. 'Why then did you stop him? We have lost more than ten lines by this interruption.' So parsimonious was he of his time. He rose from dinner in the summer by daylight, in winter before seven, as regularly as if constrained by law. Thus he lived in the midst of his work and in the bustle of Rome. In the country, he exempted only his bathing-time from study; I mean, the actual time of his immersion in the water, for while he was being rubbed or dried, he would hear something read or would dictate something. While travelling, he threw aside every other care, and gave himself up to study; he always had a scribe at his side with a book and a writing-tablet, whose hands in winter were protected by gloves, so that the cold weather might not rob him of a single moment. Even at Rome, he used to be carried in a litter with this view. I remember his rebuking me for taking a walk. 'You might have managed,' he said, 'not to lose these hours.' In fact, he thought all time lost which was not given to study. It was by this intense application that he completed so great a number of books, and left me, besides, a hundred and sixty volumes of extracts, written on both sides of the leaf, and in the minutest hand. He used to tell me that when he was governor in Spain, he might have sold these volumes to Largius Licinus for more than £3000, and then there were fewer of them. Would you not think, when you call to mind how much he read and wrote, that he had never held office or enjoyed an emperor's favour? And again, on hear-

ing of the intensity of his application, would you not say that he had not read or written enough? It makes me smile, when people call me a student; for, compared with him, I am a mere idler. For myself, I am but a man whose attention is divided between public business and services rendered to friends. Yet of those who devote their life to letters, who would not blush at being compared with my uncle, and feel himself utterly lazy and slothful? I have written a long letter, though you wished only to know what works he left behind him; but I am sure that this account of him will be quite as acceptable to you as a list of the books themselves, and it may have the effect of urging you in a spirit of emulation not merely to read them, but even to accomplish some similar work."

The nephew, as we shall see, was a less close student than the uncle, but a man whose range of interests was wider and more diversified.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT ERUPTION OF VESUVIUS.

THE summer of A.D. 79 was made memorable by a frightful catastrophe, of which Pliny was an eye-witness, and of which he has left us a singularly valuable account, in two letters written some years afterwards to his friend the historian Tacitus. The writer was, as usual, residing at the time with his uncle and his mother near Misenum, where the elder Pliny was in command of the fleet stationed at that place—a promontory which forms the northern extremity of the Bay of Naples. The Bay, then, as now, one of the most beautiful spots in the world, was crowded with the villas of the Roman nobility. Baia, the Brighton of Rome, with its splendid baths and terraces built out into the sea; Puteoli, with its busy harbour; Neapolis, one of the largest and wealthiest of the Italian cities; with Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabia, —occupied the sea-coast in an almost continuous line. Behind them, with its slopes reaching almost to the sea, rose Vesuvius, clad to its summit, which reached the height of about 4000 feet,

with olive and vine. A luxuriant vegetation concealed all traces of the volcanic nature of the mountain, and neither history nor tradition preserved any record which might warn the populous cities at its base of the danger which threatened them. Earthquakes, indeed, were not unfrequent in the country ; and one of more severity than usual had, sixteen years before, seriously injured both Herculaneum and Pompeii. But of the existence of a volcano no suspicion seems to have been entertained.

* It was at one o'clock in the afternoon of the 24th of August that the elder Pliny, always an eager observer of natural phenomena, was summoned by his sister-in-law from his study to witness a strange sight—a cloud of unusual size and shape, which was visible on the opposite side of the Bay. It rose from one of the hills, which the observers did not know at the time to be Vesuvius, like a stone-pine with a lofty trunk and a cluster of branches at the top, continually varying in height, and of a changing hue, sometimes fiery-bright, sometimes streaked with black. It was the beginning of that great shower of ashes and dust which is said—a not incredible assertion, when we compare it with the records of other eruptions—to have reached as far as Africa and Egypt. The old philosopher, anxious to get a nearer view of what was happening, ordered one of the light vessels belonging to the fleet to be manned. At the same time he invited his nephew to accompany him ; an offer which the young man, who was more attached to literature than to natural science,

* This account gives the substance of *Epist. vi. 16.*

declined, pleading in excuse a literary task which his uncle had set him. The two did not meet again. The uncle, whose fortunes our narrative will follow for the present, changed his purpose on arriving at the shore. A letter was put into his hands from Rectina, the wife of Cæsius Bassus, a poet of some eminence, who had a villa on the shore of the Bay. This lady was terrified at the danger in which she found herself—not without reason, if it be true, as we are told, that her husband actually perished in the eruption. The admiral's philosophical curiosity gave place to a more serious purpose. Others besides Rectina were imperilled, and he might give them help. The galleys of the fleet were ordered to put to sea, and to steer for the opposite side of the Bay, where the danger was obviously most imminent. How serious this danger was, became more evident as they approached the scene. Showers of cinders and fragments of heated stone fell around and upon the ships. At the same time it was found that the soundings of the Bay were altered—an effect attributed to the falling masses, but probably in a great measure owing to an elevation of the sea-bed. The elder Pliny, who had continued calmly to note down his observations, hesitated for a moment whether or no he should proceed ; his sailing-master strongly advised return. His resolve was soon taken. Crying out, “ Fortune helps the bold,” he gave orders that the fleet should make for the little town of Stabiæ, near the extreme southern point of the Bay, where his friend, or, as some suppose, his second in command, Pomponianus, was residing. While the ships were

busy in embarking the terrified inhabitants of the coast, the admiral himself, who had landed at his friend's villa, did his best to encourage the frightened inmates, and proceeded, with what was anyhow an admirable assumption of cheerfulness, to enjoy the bath and dinner which formed the customary close of a Roman gentleman's day. Flames, which the approaching darkness had now made more visible, were seen to break forth from the summit and sides of Vesuvius, and the alarm at the villa increased. The philosopher made light of these fears, and accounted for the flames by the theory that some of the country houses in the neighbourhood, which had been deserted by their inhabitants, had caught fire. He then retired to his bedchamber; the other inmates of the house were in no humour for sleep, but as they passed his door they heard the deep snoring (the philosopher was of a corpulent habit) which indicated that his slumbers were undisturbed. Before long, however, it was found necessary to rouse him. His apartment was approached from an open court, and this was filling up so rapidly with ashes and stones that egress would soon have become impossible. He rose and joined his friends, who were in doubt what course to pursue. The house was trembling with frequent shocks of earthquake, and threatened destruction to its inmates. Out of doors there was the peril of the falling stones, which, though calcined with fire, and therefore light in proportion to their size, seemed sufficiently heavy to be dangerous.* To leave the house appeared,

* Some have been found at Pompeii, which was, however,

on the whole, the preferable alternative. With pillows and cushions fastened upon their heads by way of protection, the party sallied forth, first making their way to the sea, by which they hoped to secure their escape. They found it wild and stormy, with the wind blowing strongly on shore, and were compelled for the present to abandon the idea. The old man, fatigued with his exertions, lay down upon a rug which the attendants spread for him. Twice he asked for a draught of cold water; then, when the sudden approach of flames and sulphurous vapour dispersed the party, in attempting, with the help of two of his servants, to rise from the ground, he fell dead. The actual cause of his death cannot be determined. His nephew says that he was choked with sulphurous vapour, which acted the more readily on him as his breathing was affected by chronic weakness. But this account was collected from hearsay, and was written many years after the occurrence; while it may well be doubted, according to a writer of the first authority on such subjects,* whether flames and sulphurous vapours could have been present at Stabiæ, ten miles from the centre of the eruption. We may conjecture, as a more probable cause of death, a sudden attack of illness. This supposition agrees with what we are told was the appearance of the corpse when it was found three days afterwards,—“The attitude of the body was more like that of a sleeper than that of a dead man.”

considerably nearer to Vesuvius, weighing as much as eight pounds. At Stabiæ, none have been found exceeding an ounce in weight.

* Professor Phillips: ‘Vesuvius,’ p. 20.

We must now return to the younger Pliny and his mother. The narrative which he gives us of his own adventures* is so characteristic of the man, and at times so graphic in its descriptions, that we cannot do better than present it to our readers in a form as closely resembling the original as possible.

“When my uncle had started, I spent such time as was left on my studies—it was on their account, indeed, that I had stopped behind. Then followed the bath, dinner, and sleep,—this last disturbed and brief. There had been noticed for many days before a trembling of the earth, which had caused, however, but little fear, because it is not unusual in Campania. But that night it was so violent, that one thought that everything was being not merely moved but absolutely overturned. My mother rushed into my chamber; I was in the act of rising, with the same intention of awaking her should she have been asleep. We sat down in the open court of the house, which occupied a small space between the buildings and the sea. And now—I do not know whether to call it courage or folly, for I was but in my eighteenth year—I called for a volume of Livy, read it, as if I were perfectly at leisure, and even continued to make some extracts which I had begun. Just then arrived a friend of my uncle, who had lately come to him from Spain;† when he saw that we were sitting down—that I was even reading—he rebuked my mother for her patience, and me for my blindness to the danger. Still I bent my-

* Epist. vii. 20.

† The elder Pliny had been Procurator in Spain.

self as industriously as ever over my book. It was now seven o'clock in the morning, but the daylight was still faint and doubtful. The surrounding buildings were now so shattered, that in the place where we were, which though open was small, the danger that they might fall on us was imminent and unmistakable. So we at last determined to quit the town. A panic-stricken crowd followed us. They preferred the ideas of others to their own—in a moment of terror this has a certain look of prudence—and they pressed on us and drove us on, as we departed, by their dense array. When we had got away from the building, we stopped. There we had to endure the sight of many marvellous, many dreadful things. The carriages which we had directed to be brought out moved about in opposite directions, though the ground was perfectly level; even when scotched with stones they did not remain steady in the same place. Besides this, we saw the sea retire into itself, seeming, as it were, to be driven back by the trembling movement of the earth. The shore had distinctly advanced, and many marine animals were left high and dry upon the sands. Behind us was a dark and dreadful cloud, which, as it was broken with rapid zigzag flashes, revealed behind it variously-shaped masses of flame: these last were like sheet-lightning, though on a larger scale. Then our friend from Spain addressed us more energetically and urgently than ever. 'If your brother,' he said, 'if your uncle is alive, he wishes you to be saved; if he has perished, he certainly wished you to survive him. If so, why do you hesitate to escape?' We

answered that we could not bear to think about our own safety while we were doubtful of his. He lingered no longer, but rushed off, making his way out of the danger at the top of his speed. It was not long before the cloud that we saw began to descend upon the earth and cover the sea. It had already surrounded and concealed the island of Capræ, and had made invisible the promontory of Misenum. My mother besought, urged, even commanded me to fly as best I could; 'I might do so,' she said, 'for I was young; she, from age and corpulence, could move but slowly, but would be content to die, if she did not bring death upon me.' I replied that I would not seek safety except in her company; I clasped her hand, and compelled her to go with me. She reluctantly obeyed, but continually reproached herself for delaying me. Ashes now began to fall—still, however, in small quantities. I looked behind me; a dense dark mist seemed to be following us, spreading itself over the country like a cloud. 'Let us turn out of the way,' I said, 'whilst we can still see, for fear that should we fall in the road we should be trodden under foot in the darkness by the throngs that accompany us.' We had scarcely sat down when night was upon us,—not such as we have when there is no moon, or when the sky is cloudy, but such as there is in some closed room when the lights are extinguished. You might hear the shrieks of women, the monotonous wailing of children, the shouts of men. Many were raising their voices, and seeking to recognise by the voices that replied, parents, children, husbands, or wives. Some

were loudly lamenting their own fate, others the fate of those dear to them. Some even prayed for death, in their fear of what they prayed for. Many lifted their hands in prayer to the gods; more were convinced that there were now no gods at all, and that the final endless night of which we have heard had come upon the world.* There were not wanting persons who exaggerated our real perils with terrors imaginary or wilfully invented. I remember some who declared that one part of the promontory Misenum had fallen, that another was on fire; it was false, but they found people to believe them. It now grew somewhat light again; we felt sure that this was not the light of day, but a proof that fire was approaching us. Fire there was, but it stopped at a considerable distance from us; then came darkness again, and a thick heavy fall of ashes. Again and again we stood up and shook them off; otherwise we should have been covered by them, and even crushed by the weight. I might boast that not a sigh, not a word wanting in courage, escaped me, even in the midst of peril so great, had I not been convinced that I was perishing in company with the universe, and the universe with me—a miserable and yet a mighty solace in death. At last the black mist I had spoken of seemed to shade off into smoke or cloud, and to roll away. Then came genuine daylight, and the sun shone out with a lurid light, such as it is wont to have in an eclipse. Our eyes, which had not yet re-

* This final annihilation of the universe, in which the gods themselves would be included, was an idea common to the classical and Scandinavian mythologies.

covered from the effects of fear, saw everything changed, everything covered deep with ashes as if with snow. We returned to Misenum, and, after refreshing ourselves as best we could, spent a night of anxiety in mingled hope and fear. Fear, however, was still the stronger feeling; for the trembling of the earth continued, while many frenzied persons, with their terrific predictions, gave an exaggeration that was even ludicrous to the calamities of themselves and of their friends. Even then, in spite of all the perils which we had experienced and which we still expected, we had not a thought of going away till we could hear news of my uncle."

This account, though sufficiently vivid in its description of the feelings and demeanour of the writer and his companions, is scarcely satisfactory as a narrative of facts. The writer does not tell us in what direction the fugitives proceeded, though we may gather, from what he says about the island of Capreæ having become invisible, that they advanced along the shore of the Bay, and therefore towards the immediate neighbourhood of the eruption. Capreæ (*Capri*) would have been naturally hidden by the high land of the promontory from persons travelling in a northerly direction. Again, he says nothing about the time covered by his narrative. But as he would probably have mentioned the circumstance, had he passed a night in the open air, we may suppose that he returned to the villa at Misenum on the afternoon of the same day on which he had quitted it, this day being the 25th of August. The promontory is about twenty miles distant from Vesuvius, and the strong north wind which

was blowing during the day would have helped to clear the atmosphere. At Stabiæ, on the opposite side of the Bay, and much nearer to the mountain, the effects of the eruption lasted longer. The body of the elder Pliny was found, we are told, "on the morning of the third day from that which he had last seen." This day "which he had last seen" must have been the 24th,* that on which he quitted his house; for though he was alive on the morning of the next, we are told that everything was wrapt in darkness. If we follow the inclusive reckoning by which the Romans, with other nations of antiquity, commonly counted their days, we infer that it was found possible to revisit Stabiæ, and to search for the corpse, on the morning of the 26th.† It is natural to suppose that when the first violence of the eruption had been spent, the lighter showers of ashes might continue to fall on the southern side of the Bay. That much, however, could not have fallen, may be inferred from what is said about the finding of the body.

A more remarkable omission, as at first sight it appears to be, is the absence of any allusion to the fearful event which the mention of the first eruption at once suggests to us—the destruction of the cities of Hercu-

* Epist. vi. 16, 20.

† The most obvious illustration of this reckoning is to be found in the narrative of the resurrection of our Lord. According to the accounts of the evangelists, He was buried in the evening of Friday, and left the grave before dawn on Sunday, being said "to rise again on the third day," and even—a much stronger expression—to have "been three days and three nights in the earth."

laneum and Pompeii. They were both, it is true, places of third-rate importance—a fact which we are apt to lose sight of in the singular interest which they possess for us. Nevertheless the catastrophe would have been certainly noticed by our author if it had been his business, at the time of writing, to do so. But both of the letters, of which we have been making use in this chapter, were written in compliance with definite requests on the part of his correspondent. Tacitus, who was then collecting materials for his History, a work which was to include the period from the accession of Galba to the death of Domitian, first asked his friend for an account of the last hours of his uncle. A casual phrase in the letter which this request called forth, suggested to the historian that his friend's personal experiences would be of interest and value. With these, accordingly, a second letter supplied him. The particulars of the most important incident in the eruption—the destruction of the cities—he obtained elsewhere. In the prefatory chapters of the History, he mentions, among the events which he will have to record, “disasters,” as he expresses it, “either entirely novel or that recurred only after a long succession of ages,” that “cities in the richest plains of Campania were swallowed up and overwhelmed.” Unhappily this portion of the work has been lost. The consequence is, that we are left without any contemporary account of the calamity. An epigram of Martial, written about twelve years after the event, and the words which have been quoted from Tacitus, are the only allusions that we find till we come to Dion

Cassius, a Greek rhetorician of the third century. He tells us, amidst other particulars, real or fabulous, that the matter sent forth from Vesuvius buried two cities, Herculaneum and Pompeii, while the population was sitting in the theatre. Modern research informs us that Herculaneum was overwhelmed by a torrent of liquid mud, which issued from the volcano,* and that Pompeii was buried under showers of ashes and stones. The destruction of Stabiæ was not so complete, and it appears to have been soon occupied again.

* According to Professor Phillips, there is no evidence to prove that any lava-streams descended from the mountain in the eruption of A.D. 79.

CHAPTER III.

REIGN OF TERROR—DOMITIAN'S LAST DAYS—BANISHMENT OF THE PHILOSOPHERS.

DOMITIAN succeeded his brother Titus in A.D. 81. His reign of fifteen years is one of considerable interest, and it is most unfortunate that the portion of the History of Tacitus which described it is lost to us. Its early years were not without glory for the empire. Agricola's campaigns in Britain ended in the complete subjugation of the country to the Roman sway. The formidable German tribes were at least cowed by an expedition undertaken by the Emperor in person ; and though men secretly laughed at his assumption of the surname Germanicus, it appears on the whole probable that the northern frontiers of the empire were effectually strengthened. A perilous war, accompanied by some terrible reverses to the Roman arms, was also waged (A.D. 86-90) with the Dacians, a Thracian tribe on the Lower Danube, whose settlements almost coincided with Transylvania, and parts of Moldavia and Wallachia. Rome, from the time of Augustus, had found them troublesome and dangerous neighbours. On this occa-

sion a Roman legion and its commander were destroyed by them. In A.D. 90 they were pressed hard by an able Roman general, and peace was at length concluded, without, however, any extension of the frontier, and on terms which were by no means honourable to Rome. Trajan subsequently, after two successful campaigns, annexed the country to the empire. Pliny, as we shall see, speaks of this second Dacian war in one of his letters as full of picturesque incidents. He is writing to one of his literary friends, who intended to describe it in an epic poem.

There is, perhaps, hardly a more hateful name in history than that of Domitian. Yet the first part of his reign was not without promise. During this period Pliny was assiduously practising at the bar, and rising into fame as an advocate. He lived in the best literary society of Rome. After the conclusion of the Dacian war in A.D. 90, the Emperor began to show in his government the worst side of his character. He had been a bad son and a bad brother; he seemed now bent on making himself the most detestable of rulers. There can be no doubt that there was a taint of actual madness about both Caligula and Nero, which must be taken into account in passing judgment on them. Domitian was a man of considerable ability and culture, and of perfectly sane mind, and in all his cruelty and wickedness there was an intelligible purpose. With the year A.D. 93, when Pliny would be in his 32d year, a reign of terror began, which lasted to A.D. 96, the date of Domitian's death. These three years were perhaps the most dreadful period in Roman

history. In A.D. 93 the great Agricola died, and it was the popular belief that he had been poisoned by the Emperor. At any rate his death was the beginning of a series of the most horrible judicial murders. In the opening of his History, Tacitus speaks of these years as a period in which "even peace was full of horrors." "The sea," he says, "was crowded with exiles, and its rocks were polluted with bloody deeds. In the capital were yet more dreadful cruelties. Nobility, wealth, the refusal or the acceptance of office, were grounds of accusation, and virtue insured destruction. The rewards of the informers were no less odious than their crimes ; for while some seized on consulships and priestly offices as their share of the spoil, others on procuratorships and posts of more confidential authority, they robbed and plundered in every direction amid universal hatred and terror. Slaves were bribed to turn against their masters, and freedmen to betray their patrons ; and those who had no personal enemy were destroyed by friends." In his Life of Agricola, he contrasts Nero with Domitian, to the advantage of the former. "Nero," he says, "ordered cruelties to be committed, but did not himself witness them. Under Domitian, what crowned our misery was to see the tyrant, and to be seen by him, and to have our very sighs noted down against us as evidences of guilt." In that terrible year, A.D. 93, Pliny was prætor, an office which involved a seat in the senate. "I was," he says, in his panegyric of Trajan, "promoted to office by Domitian before he openly professed a hatred of all good men ; when he had done so, I sought no further

advancement." Senators were proscribed, and, as we have seen had been done before by Vespasian, the philosophers were banished from Rome, "in order that," as Tacitus says, in his introduction to the Life of Agricola, "nothing noble and virtuous might anywhere confront men's view." Pliny had many friends among the philosophers, and their society was altogether to his taste. He tells us in one of his letters, that at the time when the edict was issued which drove them into exile, he was himself staying in the house of one of their number, close to Rome. This intimacy with members of a proscribed class seems to have been an occasion of danger to him during this dreadful time. "I was," he says, in the letter above referred to, "so to speak, scorched by the thunderbolts which fell around me, and which struck down so many of my friends; and I augured from certain indications the same ruin for myself." He explains his meaning in another letter. "I should," he says, "have been the victim of an impeachment, had Domitian lived longer." In his portfolio was found a paper containing an information against me by Carus." Carus Metius was one of the class technically known as "delatores." Of these we shall hear more presently. The "delator" was a man who lived, and often rose to wealth and fame, as an informer and false accuser. As we should suppose, his trade was one likely to be fostered and encouraged by imperialism, and was sure to flourish under a bad emperor. He had prospered under Nero. He became yet more prosperous and formidable under Domitian, and was often a man of intellectual power, and had

access to even the best society. Without such a weapon the emperor's jealousy and malice would have been almost powerless to do harm. Domitian used it more systematically and mercilessly than any of his predecessors. The result is described by Tacitus in one of the opening chapters of his *Life of Agricola*. "As a former age," he says, "witnessed the extreme of freedom, so has ours witnessed the extreme of slavery, for we were robbed of the very privilege of interchanging our thoughts. We should have lost memory as well as speech, had it been as possible for us to forget as it was to keep silence."*

The reign of terror ended in A.D. 96. As Juvenal tells us, the tyrant who was red with the blood of the noblest families of Rome fell by the assassin's hand when he became an object of dread to the artisan. A promising future now opened on Pliny.

* *Agricola*, c. 45.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW AGE—VENGEANCE ON THE INFORMERS— THE GREAT PROVINCIAL TRIALS.

THOUGH Pliny, as we have seen, had, like his illustrious friend Tacitus, continued to take some part in public life even during the last and worst part of the reign of terror, he must have felt profoundly the relief when the sword of Stephanus rid the civilised world of the most dangerous tyrant it had ever known. He had been on an intimate footing with some of the most illustrious of Domitian's victims, and his own name, as we have seen, would probably have been added to the list. The strongest motives, therefore, combined to induce him to share in the movement, which was naturally the first impulse of the liberated states, to exact from the informers, who had been the most odious and deadly instruments of the fallen despot, the just penalty for their crimes. One of the earliest acts of the new reign had been formally to suppress the whole class, though the gentleness, or perhaps it should rather be said, the weakness, of Nerva, induced him to shield from punishment some of the

worst offenders. The first few days of recovered liberty were spent in hunting down inferior criminals whom no one cared to defend. Pliny took no part in these hasty proceedings, but reserved himself for a greater effort. One of the most atrocious acts of Domitian's reign had been the judicial murder of Priscus Helvidius, with whom, as with many members of his family, Pliny had been on terms of intimate friendship. It was indeed a family of martyrs to liberty, whose story well deserves to be told. No matron in the best days of Rome had been more illustrious for resolute courage than the first Arria. Pliny tells a pathetic story of the fortitude with which she bore and concealed from her husband, whose precarious health demanded the effort, the death of her son, a boy of singular beauty and promise—how she brought into the sick-chamber a face of unfailing cheerfulness, and left, as he forcibly puts it, her bereavement outside the doors. This husband, Cæcina Pætus by name, afterwards took part in an unsuccessful insurrection in Illyricum against the Emperor Claudius, and was taken a prisoner to Rome. Arria, forbidden to embark in the ship which carried him, followed in a fishing-boat across a stormy and perilous sea. When he was brought before Claudius, and found an adverse witness in the wife of Scribonianus, the leader of the movement, she broke forth in the scornful reproach, "Shall I listen to you, you in whose lap Scribonianus was killed, and who still endure to live?" Pætus, knowing that escape was hopeless, resolved to anticipate his fate by suicide. In this noble resolution (for

such it seemed to a Roman moralist) his wife sustained him, taking the dagger in her hands, and teaching him fortitude by stabbing herself, while she uttered the words which the epigram of Martial has made immortal, "*PÆTE NON DOLET.*"* The constancy with which, after her husband's death, she resolved to put an end to her own life, seemed equally worthy of praise: "I will find," she cried to the relatives who sought to restrain her, "some road to death, however painful, if you thwart me in that which is easy." The tradition of this courage was well preserved in the next generation by the second Arria, daughter of the first, and by her husband Pætus Thræsea, one of the most distinguished of the few men who ventured to keep something of the old Roman freedom under the tyranny of Nero. When that bad prince, after the murder of his mother Agrippina, wrote a letter to the senate, informing it that the deceased had conspired against him and had been justly punished, Pætus, unable to bear the shame of condoning such a crime, rose from his place, and left the house. In the next year he contrived to baffle the vengeance of the tyrant upon one whom he accused of having libelled him; and he gave the final offence by refusing to concur in the divine honours which were paid to Poppæa, the Emperor's wife. The story of his last hours is told in one of the most masterly passages, unhappily imperfect in the existing copies, of the '*Annals*' of Tacitus. His wife, Arria, who had wished to follow the example of her mother, was persuaded, for the

* "*Pætus, it does not hurt.*"

sake of her daughter, to remain alive. This daughter, Fannia by name, Thrasea had given to a man in whom he had found a spirit singularly akin to his own, Priscus Helvidius. The younger man shared to the full his father-in-law's dangerous passion for liberty, and was his companion at the feasts, at which he quaffed, as Juvenal tells us, chaplet on head, his oldest wine to the memories of great republican heroes—the Brutus who had driven out the kings, his namesake who had stabbed the dictator Cæsar, and Cassius. When Thrasea was dead, Nero seems to have been satisfied with the banishment of Helvidius. From this exile he returned when, with the accession of Galba, a better day seemed to dawn. His first act was to attack the accuser of his father-in-law, Eprius Marcellus—an attack which he repeated when Vespasian came to the throne. He made enemies right and left among the powerful class to which Marcellus belonged; and his demeanour to the Emperor was so bold, we may almost say so reckless, that these enemies were not long in bringing about his ruin. He was banished to one of the provincial towns of Italy, and an order for his death—which was, however, recalled when it was too late—soon followed him. Fannia, who had accompanied him in his first and in his second exile, returned to the capital, probably after the death of Vespasian. In the evil days of Domitian she was accused of having incited Senecio to write a panegyric on her husband, and was banished for the third time. By a former wife, whose name we do not know, Helvidius had a son who bore the same name,

and who was among Pliny's most intimate friends. He was a man of great ability, and he cherished the principles which were dear to his father, but, warned by his fate, he sought safety in avoiding public life. The precaution was of no avail. The informers found in a drama which had for its subject the loves of Paris and CEnone an attack on the private life of Domitian. No more atrocious crime was committed even in these terrible days. Not only was the man absolutely blameless, but the circumstances that attended his death were peculiarly revolting. A scene of violence to which Tacitus, who must have been present on the occasion, alludes, not without shame, disgraced the senate-house. Helvidius was actually dragged off to prison by some of the senators, among whom one Publicius Certus was conspicuous.

It was on Certus that Pliny resolved to avenge the death of his friend, and, we may say, the wrongs of a whole family. He was bowed down at the time by a severe domestic affliction, having lost his wife so recently, that etiquette did not permit him to leave the house. He sent, however, for Anteia, the widow of Helvidius, and bade her communicate his purpose to the two distinguished ladies, Arria and Fannia, who, next to the widow, were the nearest relatives of the murdered man. They had just returned from exile, and they immediately signified their approval. At the next meeting of the senate, Pliny commenced the attack. His first sentences were heard with applause, but as his purpose unfolded itself, a vigorous opposition sprang up. Why was he raking up these old troubles?

Whom was he accusing in this irregular fashion? Even his friends sought to change his purpose, using especially the ominous threat that he was making himself a marked man, whom future emperors would be sure to distrust; and pointing to the powerful friends on whom Certus relied—to one especially who was then commanding a large army in the East, and who might, it was thought, be not indisposed to play the part of another Vespasian. When the opinion of the House was called for, senator after senator, some of them friends and connections of Pliny, expressed disapproval of the proceeding. But two speakers supported him. Avidius Quietus, who had been a close friend of Thræsea, declared that the senate could not refuse to hear the complaints of Arria and Fannia, and must regard not the position but the conduct of the accused. Cornutus Tertullus told the assembly that he had been appointed guardian of the daughters of Helvidius, and pointed out to it how moderate was the request of the complainants, demanding as they did nothing more than a public censure on the guilty man. Pliny, when it came to his turn to reply, carried the senate with him. Veiento, who indeed was deeply implicated in the guilt of the informers, attempted to defend his friend, but could barely make himself heard. The presiding consul called for a division while he was still attempting to speak, and he turned away muttering a line from Homer—

“Old man, those younger warriors press thee sore.”

It is true that the Emperor, when the resolution of the

senate was sent up to him, took no action upon it. The champion of Certus was among his intimate friends, and while Veiento was in favour, Certus could scarcely be punished. It is satisfactory to know that there was not wanting a Roman of the old type to tell the truth even to an emperor. "I wonder," said Nerva to his guests at the dinner-table, when the conversation happened to turn on one of the informers, Catullus Messalinus—"I wonder what would have happened to him were he alive now." Catullus, who was blind, had distinguished himself even in these days by a cruelty peculiarly revolting and pitiless. "He would be dining with us," said Junius Mauricus, one of the guests, with a reference which could not be mistaken to Veiento, who was reclining on the same couch with the Emperor. Certus, however, did not escape with entire impunity. The consulship, to which he had been named, was bestowed upon another man; and he was superseded in his own office of Prefect of the Treasury. Nor did he long survive his disgrace. Pliny published a report of all the speeches delivered upon the occasion. Very soon after the appearance of the book Certus died. Pliny was told—and he hoped, for the sake of justice, that the report was true—that the guilty man fancied that he saw the image of his accuser, sword in hand, perpetually threatening him.

Arria seems to have died not long after her return from exile, and a letter * of Pliny's leaves it in doubt whether her daughter Fannia did not soon follow her. At least he mentions her severe and dangerous illness,

* Epist. vii. 19.

and deplores by anticipation the loss which it seemed too likely the country was about to suffer. It is pleasing to learn incidentally from this, the last notice that we have of her, that her high courage was not inconsistent with a very tender and womanly nature. Her illness was the result of the ceaseless care with which she had watched by the sick-bed of a kinswoman of her husband, one of the Vestal Virgins. The Virgins, when attacked by illness, were sent away from the temple, and committed to the care of some matron of high character. Fannia had at first voluntarily undertaken, and afterwards been regularly intrusted by the Pontiff with, the care of her relative. "What purity is in thee," cries Pliny, "what holiness, what dignity, what courage! And, at the same time, how pleasing she is, and how courteous! one who can be loved—a rare excellence this—as kind as she is respected. . . . I revered, I loved both mother and daughter; I know not which I put first; they had no thought of any difference. They had my services in prosperity,—they had them in adversity. I was able to console them in their exile, and I sought them when they came back. Still I never made them an equal return; therefore I am the more desirous that the one still left may be preserved to me, to give some more opportunity of fulfilling my obligations. This is my anxiety, as I write. If only some god will turn it into joy, I shall not complain at having felt these fears." With these wishes, of which we would gladly know the issue, Fannia vanishes from our sight. It completes the history of an unfortunate family when we learn

that the two daughters of Helvidius died in childhood.

The early years of Trajan were signalised by the punishment which overtook another class of offenders, the rapacious governors of the provinces. One of the most notorious of these was Marius Priscus,* to whose name Juvenal has given an evil immortality in one of his most pregnant lines, in which he ironically warns his friend that he must not expect much plunder when the provinces had already been squeezed to the utmost, "when Marius has just stripped his slender Africans to the skin." The Africa which Priscus had robbed was a fertile province, including the northern shore of the continent for a length of about 300 miles, now known as Tunis and part of Algiers, and important to the capital as supplying it with a great part of the wheat which Italy could no longer produce. But Marius had been something more than an ordinary robber. He had received bribes—so at least his accusers alleged—for bringing about the condemnation and death of innocent men. One Vitellius Honoratus had bought from him, for a sum of £2500 in our money, the banishment of a Roman knight and the execution of seven of his associates. Another man, Flavius Martianus by name, had paid £6000 for a similar equivalent. Here again the victim was a Roman knight. He had been beaten with clubs, then condemned to the mine, and finally strangled in prison. Marius, anxious to avoid exposure, did not attempt to defend himself against the charges of rapacity and extortion,

* See Epist. ii. 11, 12.

but, so far confessing his guilt, begged the senate to appoint arbitrators who should estimate the amount to be refunded. The province had employed as its counsel the two friends, Pliny and Tacitus. They opposed the request. The crimes of the accused had, they said, been too atrocious to admit of such a settlement. The senate decided that the arbitrators should be appointed, but that the accusers should have liberty to substantiate, if they could, the other charge. The accomplices of Priscus were summoned to attend. Honoratus died before he could be brought before the senate, but Martianus was produced. After one adjournment, made for the purpose of bringing the two accused together, the cause was heard. It was the time—the month of January—when the capital was especially crowded, and the senators attended in unusual numbers. The Emperor himself presided in his capacity of consul. Pliny, though he had had much experience as an advocate, felt nervous and anxious. Priscus had been consul, and had belonged to one of the sacred colleges; he had been already found guilty of extortion, and it might seem to be pressing hard on a fallen man to bring against him further charges. The speech, however, was a great success. It lasted for nearly five hours. The Emperor showed his personal interest in the orator by more than once suggesting to the freedman who stood behind him, that he should warn his master against an over-exertion to which his somewhat feeble frame was not equal. Pliny was followed by other advocates on both sides, and the senate was twice adjourned. A great part of the third day was

occupied by reading over the evidence. Then came the voting. Two propositions had been made. One was, that Marius should pay into the treasury the money received from Martianus, and should be banished from Rome and Italy, while the exile of Martianus was to extend also to Africa. The other was identical as far as the money was concerned, but limited the banishment of Martianus to five years, and proposed to subject the principal offender to no further penalties than he had incurred under the charge of extortion. The severer sentence was ultimately adopted. It seems to us monstrously inadequate to the offence of the guilty man ; but such was the character of the Roman law, so stern against the slave and the foreigner, so strangely mild in its dealings with citizens, even when it had to avenge a citizen's wrongs. Marius certainly suffered little from his sentence. He found some pleasant retreat out of Italy, where, as Juvenal tells us, exile though he was, he lived at ease* and "basked in the wrath of heaven." Pliny, however, seemed perfectly satisfied with the result of the trial, though he complains of the action of the senate in one which grew out of it, when the deputy of Marius had to answer for his share in his principal's crimes. This man, Hostilius Firminus by name, had managed the disgraceful affair of Martianus, receiving a private bribe of about £80—"perfume money" it had been called ; not an inappropriate name, says Pliny, for a

* Literally, "he drank from two o'clock." To dine *early* was the mark of wealth and luxury, as no business was transacted after dinner.—Juv. Sat. i. 49.

notorious fop. A proposition that he should be degraded from the senate was rejected for the milder alternative of passing over his name in allotting the provincial governments. "What can be more absurd," asks Pliny, "than that one whom the senate has censured should still sit in the senate? should have been excluded from the proconsulship for bad behaviour while he was deputy, and yet sit in judgment on proconsuls? should have been found guilty of peculation, and yet have to condemn or acquit other men? Such was the pleasure of the majority. Opinions, you know, are numbered, not weighed: so it must always be in a public assembly, where there is nothing so unequal as equality." The sensible Roman saw clearly through the specious fallacy of "universal suffrage."

It would be tedious to relate at length the course of another trial, or rather series of trials, of a similar kind, in which Pliny was engaged about this time. During the year in which Africa had been suffering under the exactions of Priscus, Bætica, one of the divisions of Further Spain, had found a worse tyrant in Cæcilius Classicus.* Curiously enough, Priscus was a native of Spain, Classicus of Africa; and the unlucky Spaniards consoled themselves by a melancholy jest upon the coincidence, "we have got as good as we gave." Classicus was an open and notorious offender. He had had the impudence regularly to enter in his books how much every disgraceful affair had brought him in. This interesting volume had been seized, as also had been a letter to his mistress at Rome. "Hurrah!" it

* Epist. iii. 9.

said, "Hurrah! I am coming to you a free man; I have sold up half these fellows in the province, and have cleared two-and-thirty thousand pounds." Classicus; however, was beyond the reach of justice. He was dead—it was more than suspected by his own hand. But other criminals were left, and the province determined to press the charge against them. They were tried, not before the senate, but before juries appointed by that body, and in batches. The prosecution, for which Pliny appeared, had no difficulty in proving agency—the facts themselves were notorious. The defence was, that the agency had been under compulsion. Pliny was successful; and though the immediate relatives of Classicus—his wife, daughter, and son-in-law had been included in the indictment—were acquitted, many of his accomplices were condemned, and visited with punishment,—utterly inadequate, as it seems to us, but yet considered at the time sufficiently severe. An incident of the trial deserves mention, for its bearing on the subject of the earlier part of the chapter. One of the witnesses turned upon Norbanus Licinianus, an official whom the province had employed to assist in the case against his late superior, and accused him of what we should call "compounding a felony," by entering into a corrupt understanding with the wife of Classicus. The wrath of the senate blazed up in a moment. The man had plied the trade of an informer in the days of Domitian. Old charges, not relevant, as far as can be seen, to the matter in hand, were brought against him—among them, one that he had corrupted one of the jurymen on a former trial. Licini-

anus was visited with a severer sentence than any that we hear of elsewhere. He was banished to an island. There must have been some solid stuff in the man, if, as Pliny tells us without knowing whether to call such conduct courage or impudence, he continued to perform his part in the great cause of which his own trial had been an interlude, without flinching, to the end.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROMAN BAR—PLINY'S PRACTICE IN THE COURT OF THE HUNDRED—REGULUS.

PLINY, as we have said, gained early distinction by practice as an advocate. The bar had long been an honourable profession at Rome, and the way to wealth and high office. In theory, the Roman counsel gave his services gratuitously; his remuneration consisted in presents from his clients, which, however, in process of time, came to be commuted into regular fees. A law was passed in 204 B.C., forbidding such fees to be received, and it was confirmed during the reign of Augustus by a decree of the senate. Under the reigns of his successors it seems to have been systematically evaded, and occasional attempts to revive it proved failures. The law, in fact, must have become a dead letter; and all that was done to check the supposed evils of hired advocacy was to limit the amount which a counsel might receive. This, as we have it from Tacitus and from Pliny, was fixed at about £80, and it was understood to be illegal for an advocate to receive this fee till he had actually rendered his services. It seems, however, hardly likely that such

a regulation could have been strictly enforced. The lawyers, we may be sure, were too useful and influential a class to be tied down by any such artificial arrangement. Tacitus mentions an instance of a fee of something like £3500 having been once paid by a Roman knight. Senators of moderate fortune had always been in the habit of increasing their means by practice at the bar; and though, from time to time, they might grossly abuse their opportunities by shameless rapacity, it was on the whole felt to be expedient to put as little legal restraint on them as possible. Pliny very clearly implies in one of his letters that it must be left to public opinion to adjust the relations between advocates and their clients.

It was, as we have seen, at the end of Vespasian's reign that Pliny entered on the profession of the bar, and it would seem that he continued it during the reigns of Titus and Domitian. He was well off, but by no means so rich as many men of his time; and he, no doubt, found in the pursuit of the law the surest road to wealth and official rank. The court in which he began to practise, and with which indeed he seems chiefly to have been connected, was distinguished as the Court of the Hundred. Its precise functions are not clearly known to us; it is, however, certain that it had to decide a great number of important civil matters, and that various questions concerning ownership and the devolution of property were brought before it. Pliny frequently alludes to it, and in the following letter describes some peculiar and amusing practices to which young aspirants to legal fame were

not ashamed to stoop. The letter is addressed to his friend Maximus : * —

“ Your conjecture is correct ; I am at present quite overworked with cases in the Hundred Court, which give me more occupation than pleasure. Most of them are paltry and insignificant, for we seldom get a case in which a distinguished person or an important matter is involved. Besides, only a few of the counsel are men with whom it is any satisfaction to hold a brief ; the rest are an impudent set, and many of them are unknown young men, who come into the court to make a speech by way of practice ; and they do it with so little respect for their profession, and so recklessly, that I think my friend Atilius has very correctly said, that boys make a beginning at the bar with cases in the Hundred Court, just as they begin their school studies with Homer. At the bar, as at school, the most important study is the first entered on. Before my time, so my seniors tell me, even the noblest youths could find no place in court unless they were introduced by a man of consular rank ; so great was the respect with which the most honourable of all professions was regarded. Now all the barriers of modesty and reverence are broken down, and instead of being introduced, they thrust themselves into the court. They have an audience like themselves, regularly hired for the occasion ; a speculator contracts to supply them ; presents are passed to them quite openly in the court, and they go for the same hire from court to court. Yesterday two young slaves of mine

* Epist. ii. 14.

were dragged off to applaud somebody, at half-a-crown apiece. Such is the price of the highest eloquence. For this you may fill a number of benches, collect a crowd, and have a burst of cheering as soon as ever the leader of the chorus has given his signal. Those who don't understand, and who are not even listening, must have a signal given them. Most of them pay no attention, and these very persons cheer the most loudly. If you ever have occasion to go through the colonnade in which the court is held, and wish to know how the different speakers acquit themselves, you need not go on to the raised platform where the judges sit—you need not listen to the speeches; it is easy enough to give a right guess, for you may be sure that the man who is most loudly cheered is the worst speaker. *Largius Licinus* was the first to introduce this fashion, but he only went round to people, and begged them to come to the court and hear the speeches. This, at any rate, is what I remember to have been told by my tutor, *Quintilian*. 'I used,' he said, 'to attend on the famous pleader *Domitius Afer*, and to go with him into court. Once, when he was speaking in his usual slow and impressive manner before the Hundred, he heard close to him a great and strange noise. He paused in astonishment. As soon as it ceased, he resumed the thread of his argument, when the noise was repeated. He again paused, and, when silence was restored, for the third time continued his speech. At last he asked, who was speaking? The reply was, *Licinus*. Upon this he broke off the case, and addressing the judges, said, "My profession, gentlemen, is at an end."

Indeed, for many other reasons, the profession of the bar was on its way to ruin at the time when Afer thought it was wholly ruined. Now, it is certain that it is all over with it. I am ashamed to tell you of the mincing and affected pronunciation of the speakers, and of the shrill-voiced applause with which their speeches are received. All that is wanted to complete the performance is the clapping of hands, and the noise of drums and cymbals; even the wildest shouting (for there is no other phrase to describe a style of cheering which would be unseemly in a theatre) is a frequent accompaniment. For myself, a regard for the benefit of my friends, and my comparative youth, still keep me to my professional work; for I am afraid that people would think that I had given up a laborious occupation rather than simply avoided such disgraceful scenes. However, I go into court less frequently than was my wont, and this is a beginning of gradual retirement from practice."

Pliny's practice in this court had brought him into contact with one of the worst and most notorious specimens of the informer class. This was Regulus, who is the subject of frequent allusions in these letters. He had laid the foundations of a successful career in Nero's reign, and had continued to struggle out of obscure poverty into immense wealth and high social position. Under Vespasian and Titus he must have been obliged to content himself with simply living on his ill-gotten gains; but the last years of Domitian raised him to the very highest pinnacle of prosperity. He became a prince among millionaires, and a terror

to all good men. It is painful to find such a man the object of the grossest flatteries from the poet Martial, and it shows how a man of real genius could become morally debased under the sinister influences of that bad time. To the infamous trade of a false accuser Regulus added the practice of the arts of the fortune-hunter, which he plied with the most shameless assiduity. Pliny's stories about him illustrate a curious phase of Roman life. The following letters (of which we give the substance) show us the manner of man that he was, and may be supposed to indicate the general character of his class.

PLINY TO VOCONIUS ROMANUS.*

"Did you ever see a man more cowed, more down in the mouth, than Regulus since Domitian's death? His crimes under Domitian were quite as bad as those under Nero, but they were less easy of detection. He began to fear I was angry with him, and so indeed I was. He had done his best to imperil Rusticus Arulenus; he openly rejoiced at his death, and even published a book in which he abused him, and called him 'an ape of Stoic philosophers.' He made such a savage attack on Herennius Senecio that Metius Carus said to him, 'What have you to do with my victims? Did I ever attack Crassus or Camerinus?' These were men whom Regulus had accused and ruined in Nero's reign. He thought I was indignant at all this; and so, when he gave a reading to a select circle out of the book he had published, he did not invite me.

* Epist. i. 5.

He remembered, too, what a savage attack he had once made on me in the Court of the Hundred. I was counsel for Arrionilla, a case which I had undertaken at the request of Arulenus. I had Regulus against me. In one part of the case I laid much stress on an opinion given by Modestus, an excellent man, who was then by Domitian's order in banishment. Up jumps Regulus, and says to me, 'Pray, what view do you take of the character of Modestus?' It would, you see, have been very dangerous to me to have replied, 'I think well of him;' it would have been an infamous thing to have said the contrary. Well, I really believe that Providence helped me out of the scrape. 'I will answer your question,' I replied, 'if this is the matter on which the court is about to pronounce judgment.' He could say nothing. I was praised and congratulated for having avoided compromising my credit by a safe but discreditable answer, and for having escaped the snare of such an invidious question. He was thoroughly frightened, and rushes up to Cæcilius Celer and Fabius Justus, and begs them to reconcile us. This was not enough for him; he goes off to Spurinna, and, with that cringing manner which he always has when he is frightened, he says to him, 'Pray, go and call on Pliny the very first thing in the morning (be sure you do this, for I can't endure my anxiety any longer), and do your best to prevail on him not to be angry with me.' I had risen early; there comes a message from Spurinna to this effect, 'I am coming to see you.' I sent back word, 'I am myself coming to you.' Well, we meet on the way in

Livia's portico ; Spurinna explains the wishes of Regulus, and adds his own entreaties, as you would expect from a very good man on behalf of one wholly unlike himself. I replied to him, ' You will yourself clearly perceive what message you think had best be sent back to Regulus ; you ought not to be misled by me. I am waiting the return of Mauricus (he had not yet come back from exile) ; I can't give you an answer either way, because I mean to do whatever he decides on, for he ought to be my leader in this matter, and I ought to be simply his follower.' A few days afterwards, Regulus met me at one of the prætor's levees ; he kept close to me, and begged me to give him a private interview. He then told me he was afraid that a remark he had once made in the Court of the Hundred still rankled in my mind. The remark, he said, was made when he was replying as counsel to myself and to Satrius Rufus, and was this—' Satrius Rufus, who does not attempt to rival Cicero, and who is content with the eloquence of our own day.' My answer to him was—' I see now that you meant it ill-naturedly, because you admit it yourself ; but your remark might have been taken as intended to be complimentary. I do try to rival Cicero, and I am not content with the eloquence of our own day. It is, I think, the height of folly not to propose to one's self the best pattern for imitation. But how comes it that you remember this circumstance so distinctly, and have forgotten the occasion in court when you asked me what was my opinion of the loyalty of Modestus ?' Pale as he always looks, he then turned as pale as

death, and stammered out that he asked the question, not to hurt me, but to hurt Modestus. Note the fellow's vindictive cruelty; he actually confessed to himself that he wished to do an injury to one in exile. He added an admirable reason for his conduct. 'Modestus,' he said, 'in a letter written by him which was read out before Domitian, used the following expression—Regulus, of all two-footed creatures the wickedest.' And Modestus was perfectly right. This ended our conversation. I did not wish to go further in the matter, or to tie my hands in any way, till Mauricus had returned. I am very well aware that Regulus is a formidable person. He is rich, influential, courted by many, feared by many, and to be feared often does more for a man than to be loved."

The following letter, written after the death of Regulus, describes some of the eccentric devices by which he endeavoured to render his pleading in court more effective.

PLINY TO ARRIANUS.*

"Sometimes I miss Regulus in our courts. I cannot say I deplore his loss. My reason for missing him is, that he really respected his profession, that he bestowed infinite labour on it, made himself pale with study and anxiety, wrote out his speeches, though he could not get them by heart. He had a queer practice of painting round his right eye if he was counsel for the plaintiff, his left if he was for the defendant; of wearing a white patch on his forehead; of asking the

* Epist. vi. 1.

soothsayers what the issue of the action would be, and so forth. Yet all this eccentricity was really due to his extreme earnestness in his profession. There was another thing which was very acceptable to the counsel who were engaged with him. He asked for unlimited time in speaking, and he got together an audience. What could be pleasanter than to be able to speak as long as you liked before a full court, when the odium of the whole arrangement rested with another? Still, at any rate, *Regulus* has done well in ridding the world of his presence; and he would have done better had he done it sooner. As things are now, he really might have lived without hurt to the state under an emperor in whose time he could not possibly do mischief. And so one may very properly feel that one sometimes misses him. Since his death it has become an established practice for the court to give, and for the counsel to ask, a limited time for the pleadings. For both those who plead wish to have done with it rather than to go on speaking, and the judges who hear the case are anxious to decide it rather than to continue sitting on the bench. Such neglect, such apathy—in a word, such utter indifference as to our professional duties—has come over us. Are we wiser than our ancestors, or is our practice more just and reasonable than the law itself, which liberally grants ever so many hours, and days, and adjournments? Are we to consider them dull and beyond measure tedious, and to fancy that we speak more clearly, understand more readily, decide matters with more scrupulous care, because we get through cases in

fewer hours than they took days? O Regulus! it was by zeal in your profession that you secured an advantage which is but rarely given to the highest integrity. For my own part, whenever I have to hear a case (and this I do oftener than I plead), I give the greatest amount of time which any counsel asks. It is, I think, rash to try to conjecture to what length a cause yet to be tried is likely to run, and to set a limit to an affair the extent of which is unknown to you. The very first duty which a judge owes to his position is to have that patience which constitutes an important part of justice. Even superfluous matter had better be brought forward than any really necessary point be omitted. Besides, it is impossible to say whether it is superfluous till you have heard it."

The following letter shows up Regulus in his character of a fortune-hunter:—

PLINY TO CALVISIUS.*

"I have a first-rate story for you, or rather two stories—for the one, which is quite fresh, reminded me of the other. It makes no difference with which I begin. Verania, Piso's wife (I mean the Piso adopted by the Emperor Galba), was seriously ill. Regulus pays her a visit. Think of the man's brazen impudence in calling on her in her illness, when he had been her husband's bitterest enemy, and was utterly hated by the lady herself! It would have been bad enough if he had confined himself to a mere call. He

* Epist. ii. 20.

actually sat down by her bedside, and asked her the day and the hour of her birth. When she had told him, he looks very grave, fixes his eyes on her, moves his lips, makes passes with his fingers, and goes through a calculation. After keeping the unhappy woman for a long while in suspense, he says, 'You are at a perilous crisis of your life, but you will recover. To convince you of this, I will consult an augur whose art I have often tested.' Without a moment's delay, he had a sacrifice offered up, and he declares that the victim's entrails present signs exactly agreeing with what may be inferred from the stars. The lady, whose danger made her credulous, asks for some writing-paper, and puts down in her will a legacy for Regulus. Very soon she becomes worse; and, as she is dying, she calls the man a rogue, a treacherous and worse than perjured villain, because he had actually sworn falsely to her by his son's life. It is a practice of Regulus, as wicked as it is frequent, to call down the wrath of heaven, which he so often invokes to witness a lie, on the head of his unhappy son.

"Velleius Blæsus—the wealthy man, I mean, who rose to the consulship—was in his last illness, and wished to alter his will. Regulus, who hoped to get something out of the alteration, because he had of late paid court to him, begged and implored the physicians to lengthen his life by all possible means. When the will had been signed and sealed, he changed his character and reversed his tone, and said to these same physicians, 'How long do you mean to keep the unhappy man in misery; why do you grudge one to

whom you cannot give life, the happy release of death?' Blæsus dies, and as if he had heard everything, leaves Regulus not a farthing. Are two stories enough for you, or would you like to have a third, after the manner of school exercises? Well, I have got one for you. Aurelia, an extremely elegant lady, when about to set the seal to her will, had put on a remarkably handsome dress. Regulus came to witness the signature, and on his arrival he said to the lady, 'Pray, leave me by your will the dress you have on.' Aurelia thought the man was joking. Regulus pressed the matter in earnest, and, to cut my story short, he actually made the lady open her desk, and add a clause to her will, leaving him the dress. All the time she was writing it, he kept his eye on her, and looked to see whether she had really written it. The man gets bequests and legacies just as if he deserved them. Why do I dwell on such matters, when we are living in a country in which wickedness and roguery have long been able to command as great, nay, greater rewards than virtue and honour? Look at Regulus; from abject poverty he has made his way, by all sorts of rascality, to such prodigious wealth that he himself told me that when he asked an augur how soon he should be able to amass a fortune of half a million, he found that twice that amount was promised him by the signs exhibited by the victim's entrails. And he will get it, if he only pursues his present course of making persons, when they prepare their wills, add to them clauses which they never intended to insert."

It would appear, from the two following letters

which describe his strange demeanour on the death of his son, that Regulus had all the extravagant affectation which is sometimes found in the *nouveaux riches*.

PLINY TO ATTIIUS CLEMENS.*

“Regulus has lost his son ; the only misfortune he did not deserve, and I am not sure whether he thinks it a misfortune. The boy had quick parts, but one could not be at all sure how he would turn out ; still, he seemed to have a capacity for virtue, were he not to grow up like his father. Regulus gave him the legal release from parental control, so that the lad might become heir to his mother’s property, and having done this (I speak of the current rumours, based on the man’s character), he fawned on the lad with a disgusting show of fond affection, which in a parent was utterly out of place. Incredible, you will say, but only consider the man. At any rate he deplores his death in a most insane fashion. The boy had a number of ponies for riding and driving, of big and little dogs, and a host of pet nightingales, parrots, and blackbirds. All these Regulus had slaughtered on the funeral pile. It was not grief, but an ostentatious parade of grief. A crowd of visitors throng to his house. All hate and detest the man, and as if they loved and esteemed him, they hurry to his doors and hang round them, and, to tell you in a word what I really think, in seeking to do Regulus a kindness they make themselves exactly like him. He keeps

* Epist. iv. 2.

himself in his park on the other side the Tiber, where he has built huge colonnades over a vast extent of ground, and set up a number of his own statues on the river-side ; for with all his intense avarice he is extravagant, and in the midst of his infamy he loves fame. At this very unhealthy time of year he is boring society, and he feels pleasure and consolation in being a bore. He says he wishes to marry—a piece of perversity, like all his other conduct. You will soon hear of the marriage of one who is in mourning, the marriage of an old man. In the first case, it is too soon, in the second, too late. You ask me the grounds of my conjecture ; it is not because he says it himself, for he is as false as false can be ; it is only because one may be sure that Regulus will do whatever is highly improper.”

PLINY TO CATTIUS LEPIDUS.*

“I often tell you that Regulus has a certain force of character. It is wonderful to see how he gets through a thing to which he has applied himself. He made up his mind to mourn the death of his son ; he is absolutely unequalled as a mourner. It was his fancy to get together an immense number of statues and pictures of his son ; so he sends orders to all the sculptors and painters, and has the boy represented on canvas, in wax, bronze, silver, gold, ivory, marble, &c. &c. He himself actually invited to his house a numerous audience to hear him read his son’s memoir—the

* Epist. iv. 7.

memoir of a mere boy. However, he read it ; he even had a thousand copies made of it, and distributed throughout Italy and the provinces. He had a public notice put up, that the town-councils were to choose out of their number the man with the best voice, to read the book to the people. It was really done. Only suppose he had used this force of character, or whatever you call this earnestness, in trying to get what one wants, for better ends, and what good would he have been able to accomplish ! There is, however, less of this quality about the good than the bad, and as (to quote Thucydides) ‘folly genders confidence, while thoughtfulness produces hesitation,’ so modesty often cripples the action of virtue, as effrontery strengthens vice. Regulus is an example. He has weak lungs, a confused look, a stammering tongue, a slow and dull imagination, no memory—nothing in short but a sort of frantic energy ; and yet by his impudence and mad vehemence he has won the reputation of an orator. Cato has a famous definition of an orator, which Herennius Senecio has curiously reversed about Regulus, thus : ‘An orator is a bad man who has no skill in speaking.’ Cato certainly has not more correctly described the true orator than Senecio has hit off Regulus.”

We now take leave of Regulus. The tone of this last letter looks as if Pliny’s dislike of the man led him to speak more contemptuously of him than facts could have warranted him in doing. If Regulus

laboured under so many natural disadvantages, his success in his profession must have implied a force of character of a remarkably high order. He and many of his class were no doubt morally as bad as it was possible to be, but they were by no means intellectually contemptible.

CHAPTER VI.

MEN OF LETTERS AT ROME.

CIRCUMSTANCES combined to produce at Rome in the days of the Empire a very considerable amount of literary activity. For more than two centuries the wealth of the whole civilised world had been pouring into the capital. This influx had promoted the growth of two things, which to the men of the old *régime*—to such Conservatives, for instance, as Cato—seemed equally odious, luxury and culture. The first impulse of the monied class—a class whose riches equalled, if they did not surpass, even the largest fortunes of modern times—was to surround itself with the means of material enjoyment and display. But it was not long before more refined tastes began to be developed. Among the spoils of the world with which a long series of conquests had crowded the palaces of Rome, were to be found the treasures of Hellenic civilisation—manuscripts, pictures, and statues, the contents of the libraries and museums which the Greek, almost invariably a scholar as well as a soldier, had founded so plentifully in Eastern Europe and Western Asia. With

these had come, in throngs which excited the wrath and scorn of satirists like Juvenal, the teachers of literature and art. From the decaying and impoverished cities of the East they crowded to the place where a nation of wealthy pupils was waiting to welcome and to remunerate their services. At the same time, the class which was thus so abundantly furnished with all the appliances of culture, was profoundly affected in its habits of life by the revolution which substituted an empire for a republic. One great resource in which men of wealth find occupation, which to our own monied class, for instance, is so fascinating—the devotion to public affairs—ceased to be available at Rome. Men were still selected, indeed, from the highest nobility to fill the offices of proconsul and prætor in the provinces; and at Rome the old magistracies of the republic and the senate still remained, though they had but the shadow of their former dignity. But politics had ceased to furnish a profession. Tacitus complains of the men of his time, that they were as ignorant about their country as if it were not their own. Under such emperors as Nero, men of average character, who on the one hand would not stoop to the vile art of the sycophant and the informer, and, on the other, did not choose to venture their lives in impossible attempts at reform, clung to the safe retirement of private life, while a vigorous ruler like Trajan kept all power in his own hands, and left nothing for his subjects to do. At the same time, the bar had greatly degenerated from that which Hortensius and Cicero had adorned. It was no longer the avenue to power, though it was still the

road to office, and might be made the means of accumulating riches. When we consider these circumstances, it does not surprise us to find that literature furnished occupation not only to a numerous class of professional writers, but to many men of rank and wealth.

Among these must be ranked C. SILIUS ITALICUS. He was by many years Pliny's senior, having been born A.D. 25. He followed with success the profession of an advocate, and had been a member of the Hundred Court. Unfortunately for his character, he became a prominent person in the state when it was passing through its most evil day. A sinister rumour which our author mentions, and evidently does not disbelieve, had attributed to him a share in the infamous practices and gains of the informers. In reward, possibly, for these services, he was raised in the last year of Nero's reign to the consulship. The "Lists of the consuls" record that he, with his colleagues, abdicated office, and that the Emperor, then in his last paroxysm of suspicion, succeeded to the vacancy "without colleague." In the terrible year that followed, "the year of the three emperors," and while enjoying the dangerous honour of an intimate friendship with Vitellius, he behaved with wisdom and courtesy. When that Emperor, pressed hard by the troops of Vespasian, sought to secure his safety by resigning his throne, and held for this purpose an interview with the elder brother of his successful rival, Silius was one of the two witnesses who were present. The government of the province of Asia, a province which may be roughly described as comprising the western half of the penin-

sula of Asia Minor, followed in due course. It was one of the chief commands in the empire, and Silius exercised it with great distinction and credit. After this he took no active part in political life, though he was still a prominent personage at Rome—"prominent," says Pliny, "but exercising no power and exciting no hostility." In this position his conduct was so blameless, that the errors of his earlier life were willingly forgotten. No house in the capital was more thronged, or by more sincere admirers. At some time in the short reign of Nerva, warned by his increasing infirmities, he retired from the capital, which, as Pliny mentions with admiring surprise, he did not even revisit to pay his respects to a new emperor, when Nerva was succeeded by Trajan. He was in his seventy-fifth year when the pain of some incurable disease, probably a cancer, made him resolve to put an end to his life. Abstaining from food was then the fashionable method of suicide, and the old man resolutely starved himself to death. The name of Silius is known to students of Latin literature by the accident which has preserved his tedious poem on the Punic war. Of the poetical merits of that work little need be said. The author was wholly without genius—an imitator, not surpassingly skilful, of Virgil. And he offends at least modern taste by the mythological machinery which he introduces into the narrative of historical events. Whatever interest attaches to his verses belongs to the antiquarian or geographical information which they convey. As a poet, he seems indeed to have been little esteemed by his contemporaries. Pliny disposes of him with a

very brief criticism. "He used to write verses with more diligence than force." He has more to say of him as a connoisseur and collector. These tastes were developed in him till they grew to a positive frenzy for buying. "He became the possessor of several country houses in the same localities, was passionately fond of the last acquisition, and left the others to neglect. All of them were crowded with books, with statues, with busts. These last he not only kept about him, he absolutely worshipped." Among them was one which connected together his literary and his artistic tastes. It was the likeness of Virgil, and he held it in especial reverence. He was accustomed to keep the birthday of his master with more solemnity than he kept his own, and to visit the tomb where the great poet lay on the shore of the Bay of Naples with such respect as worshippers pay to a temple.

Much nearer to Pliny, and bound to him by the ties of intimate friendship, was C. CORNELIUS TACITUS. When, after his uncle's death, Pliny came, still a mere youth, to Rome, and began to practise in the law courts, he found Tacitus at the head of his profession. A splendid alliance (he had married the daughter of the great soldier Agricola) had assured his position, and he seemed likely to rise to the highest eminence in the state. Some reason unknown—it may have been a command in the provinces, it may have been the now precarious position of his father-in-law—took him for several years from the capital, to which he returned only to become an unwilling witness of the horrors of the last years of Domitian. In the early days of the

better time that followed he took an active part in public affairs. We have seen him associated with Pliny in one of the great provincial trials. In A.D. 100 we find him appointed consul to supply the vacancy caused by the death of Verginius Rufus. The funeral oration over the old man, the Wellington of his day, who almost seemed to rise above the throne which he had once refused, was pronounced by his successor. "It was the crown of his good fortune," cried the enthusiastic friend of the orator, "that he found in Cornelius Tacitus the most eloquent of panegyrists." With his consulate, however, his public life seems to have closed. Affairs of state must always be unattractive to men of genius under an absolute ruler, whether he be an enlightened prince like Trajan, or a suspicious tyrant like Domitian. How wholly Tacitus had withdrawn himself from them is evident, when we find him recommending to the good offices of Pliny a certain Naso, who was a candidate for one of the magistracies, wholly ignorant of the fact that it was under the auspices of Pliny that Naso had originally started.

Tacitus had probably made his first essay in literature—if the 'Dialogue about Famous Orators' be really his—at a time when Pliny was still a boy. His 'Life of Agricola' was published in the reign of Nerva, his 'Treatise on Germany' shortly after the accession of Trajan. Meanwhile he was living on terms of close friendship with Pliny. The two constantly interchanged works for mutual criticism. On the side of Pliny these seem to have been, for the

most part, revisions of speeches which he had delivered. Among the works which Tacitus submitted to the judgment of his friend may have been the 'Treatise on Germany.' About the others we cannot even form a conjecture. He was busy, however, with preparations for a greater work, his History, which had for its subject the period beginning with the accession of Galba and ending with the death of Domitian. We have seen how, in his search for materials, he applied to Pliny for such information as he could give about the great eruption of Vesuvius. In another letter we find his friend volunteering particulars of an incident out of which he believed himself to have come with considerable credit, and begging that it might find a place in the forthcoming work. The intimacy that grew up out of this community of literary interests became very close, and the Letters repeatedly express the joy and pride which it gave to the younger and less distinguished of the two friends. In one place he remarks with pleasure how frequently both were named in the wills of friends and acquaintances for legacies of the same amount. In another he relates to a correspondent, with great glee, a story which he had heard from Tacitus himself. The historian, it seems, was sitting with a stranger, looking on at the games in the circus. After much learned talk his new acquaintance asked him, "Are you of Italy or from the provinces?" "You know me," replied the historian, "and that from your reading." "Then," rejoined the other, "you must be either Tacitus or Pliny."

To a third man of letters, M. VALERIUS MARTIALIS,

Pliny stood in the relation of a patron rather than a friend. Martial was a native of Bilbilis in Spain, who had come towards the end of the reign of Nero to seek his fortune in Rome. He soon attracted the notice of the Emperor Titus; and Domitian, who had at least one redeeming quality in a genuine love of letters, even admitted him to his intimacy—a favour which he repaid by flattery so gross as not to admit of any defence. It is possible that one whose adulation of the tyrant stood on record against him, did not feel himself at ease under the new *régime*. Anyhow he left Rome early in Trajan's reign to return to his native country. There about four years afterwards he died, and Pliny records his decease in a letter,* a part of which it will be worth while to quote: "I hear that Valerius Martialis is dead, and I am sorry for it. He was a clever man, of a pointed wit, and of much spirit. In his writing there was plenty of flavour, plenty of bitterness, and not less of straightforward honesty. I presented him, when he was leaving Rome, with some money for his travelling expenses. So much was due to our friendship, so much to the verses he wrote about me.† It was an old custom to

* Epist. iii. 23.

† In these verses (Epig. x. 19) Martial addresses his Muse, and bids her carry his book to Pliny at his house on the Esquiline Hill. (The Esquiline had become the fashionable quarter of Rome since Mæcenas had built his great mansion there.) The latter part of the Epigram, which Pliny quotes in his letter, may be roughly Englished as follows:—

"Only take care, my tipsy Muse,
That a fit and proper time you choose

compliment with distinction or money those who had written the praise either of persons or of states. Within our days it has, like other good and honourable practices, grown obsolete, and sooner perhaps than any. When we cease to do what deserves praise, we soon begin to think that praise is a silly thing." The transaction—such a praise paid for in money—bears a curious resemblance to what was a recognised practice among ourselves, till, happily both for the purse and for the honour of our men of letters, the public superseded the patron.

Of the merits of Silius Italicus, of Tacitus, and of Martial, we are able to form a judgment for ourselves. Of the other literary contemporaries of whom Pliny speaks, nothing has been preserved, nor are their names even mentioned elsewhere. PASSENNUS PAULLUS, of whom we shall have an anecdote to relate hereafter, was a fellow-townsmen and descendant of Propertius, and had inherited a talent for writing elegiac verse. He also appears to have done what Roman poets seldom did, to have imitated Horace. Another friend,

To knock at my Pliny's eloquent gates.
 To the stern Minerva he devotes
 All his days, and elaborates
 What may win the Hundred Judges' votes,—
 Speeches which this and the coming age
 May venture to match with Tully's page.
 When may you safely go?—when the light
 Of the lamps is burning late, and the night
 Grows wild with the wine-cup, and the rose
 Is Queen of the feast, and the perfume flows
 From dripping locks. In that hour of thine
 Stern Catos may read this book of mine."

CANINIUS RUFUS, Pliny encourages in his design of celebrating in verse Trajan's campaigns in Dacia. "What subject," he says, "could you find so fresh, so full of matter, so wide—in a word, so poetical, and, though it deals with the most absolute truth, so romantic? New rivers made to flow, new bridges thrown over rivers, mountain precipices occupied with camps, a king driven from his palace, driven even from life, yet never despairing—these are the things of which you will sing." But there would be a vast difficulty, he tells his friend, in raising even his genius to the height of so vast an undertaking; and another, not to be despised, in the task of getting the barbarous names of Dacian chiefs and towns to suit the measure of his verse, which was, apparently, the Greek hexameter. There was the name of the king, for instance, Diurpaneus. All that could be said was, that he must take Homeric licence, and Homer was accustomed to alter much more tractable words.

VERGILIUS ROMANUS, a clever writer of burlesques and of comedies, which Pliny, a kindly, or perhaps it should be said, even a flattering critic, thought equal to those of Plautus and Terence, was another member of the same literary circle. In his praise of Pompeius Saturninus, an advocate like himself, our author is still more enthusiastic. He was great as a writer; hear or read his speeches, you liked them equally well. History he wrote with the same eloquence, only in a more concise and compressed style. And verses he could write like Calvus or Catullus, even to the skilful insertion of a certain archaic roughness. His last work had been a

volume of letters. It was true that he declared them to be written by his wife. In any case the whole credit of them was his ; for, says Pliny, his wife, whom he had taken unmarried from her father's house, must have received from him any learning or culture that she had—a significant remark, and perfectly consistent with what we learn from other sources, as showing that whatever education a Roman woman could boast was for the most part acquired not in the home but in the world. Another lawyer of literary tastes, whose premature death Pliny laments, was C. FANNIUS. He had snatched some time from the toils of his profession to write the 'Lives of the Victims of Nero.' Nine books only had been written ; a singular dream had warned him that he would not be permitted to add any more. He had dreamt that he was lying on his bed with his writing-desk before him, that Nero entered the chamber, sat down upon the couch, opened the first volume (this had been already published), and read it to the end, did the same with the second and the third, and then departed. Fannius, in his terror, believed that he should write no more than the dead tyrant had read, and the dream possibly did something to accomplish itself.

We must now make distinct mention of a group of accomplished foreigners, whom Pliny seems to have regarded with the same respect and affection that he showed to his Roman friends.

EUPHRATES was a Stoic philosopher, of Greek race, born (for the accounts vary) in Egypt or Syria. It was in the latter country that Pliny, then a young soldier,

had made his acquaintance, and had been admitted to his intimacy. The two met again in Rome, whither the philosopher had removed, probably attracted by the liberal patronage which the capital extended to learning. His tall stature, his handsome countenance, his long hair, and huge white beard, and an appearance wholly free from that affectation of squalor in which some of his brethren delighted, attracted favour before he spoke, and his speech was singularly winning. He discourses, says Pliny, with subtlety, with dignity, with elegance; frequently he even gives to his language all the fulness and richness of Plato. His style is copious and varied, and remarkably winning, so as to move and carry on with it even reluctant hearers. The philosopher's position was strengthened by his marriage with one of the most distinguished of the Roman families settled in his native province. Pliny mentions with praise the special care with which he educated his children, and seems indeed to have regarded him generally with the utmost affection and respect. "Why," he cries, "should I say more of a man whose company I cannot enjoy? Only, surely, to vex myself the more because I cannot. I am occupied by the duties of my office, a most important and a most troublesome one. I sit in front of the tribunal; I countersign documents; I settle accounts; I write a vast amount of the most illiterate literature." This "illiterate literature" reminds us of Charles Lamb's allusion to the volumes which he had left behind him in the India House. Euphrates consoled his friend in a very sensible fashion. "It was

a part," he said, "nay, the most honourable part, of philosophy, this discharge of public affairs, this hearing and deciding of causes, this discovering and practising of justice, this actual using of what they, the philosophers, taught." Euphrates is mentioned by others of his contemporaries. Both Arrian, a pupil of Epictetus, and author of the 'Expedition of Alexander,' and the Emperor Aurelius Antoninus, speak in high praise of his eloquence. Philostratus gives an account of him in his 'Lives of the Sophists,' where he accuses him of servility. He is said to have reached an advanced age, and to have begged and obtained permission from the Emperor Hadrian to put an end to his life.

ARTEMIDORUS was another Greek philosopher with whom Pliny made acquaintance when he was serving in Syria. He seems to have followed his friend to Rome. Certainly he was in the capital when, in A.D. 93, Domitian banished the philosophers. Pliny was one of the prætors for the year, and, though the reign of terror had begun, though the storm had fallen with especial violence on his circle of friends, and was threatening himself, he stood manfully by his friend, even venturing to visit him at the house which he occupied in the suburbs. At the same time he rendered him substantial service by the present of a large sum of money. The philosopher had made himself liable for a debt of considerable amount; and Pliny, who had, he tells us, himself to borrow the money, furnished him with the means of discharging it. When the accession of Nerva brought happier times, Artemidorus returned to Rome, and Pliny renewed his ac-

quaintance with him. "Of all who call themselves philosophers, you will scarcely," he says, "find more than one or two so single-hearted and so true. I put aside his marvellous endurance both of cold and of heat, his industry, which no labours can tire, his indifference to all the pleasures of eating and drinking, the control which he exercises over his eyes and his thoughts. These are great things, or might be in another man. In him these are but of very little weight, compared with those other virtues which made C. Musonius choose him for his son-in-law out of suitors of all ranks." Artemidorus, like Euphrates, had married into a Roman family. His father-in-law, Musonius Rufus, was an enthusiastic adherent of the Stoic philosophy—so enthusiastic, indeed, that he nearly met his end by delivering an unseasonable lecture on his favourite tenets to the combatants, when the troops of Vespasian, under the command of Antonius Pronus, were forcing their way into Rome against the desperate resistance of the adherents of Vitellius. It perfectly suits his character that he should have bestowed his daughter on a man whom many would probably have despised as a penniless scholar.

A third distinguished Greek, ISÆUS, seems to have been a visitor rather than a resident at Rome. "More fluent than Isæus" is Juvenal's description of the ready speech which he mentions among the qualities of the Greek adventurers who were thronging to the capital. He seems to have been something of an *improvisatore*, and Pliny gives a very admiring account * of his per-

* Epist. ii. 3.

formances. "I had heard a wonderful report of Isæus before his coming; but it was not equal to the reality. He possesses the utmost readiness, copiousness, and abundance of language; speaks always extempore, yet always as if he had written his speech long before. His style is genuinely Greek—I may say, Attic. His introductions are terse, elegant, attractive, sometimes weighty in matter, and loftily conceived. He suggests several themes, and permits his audience to choose, doing this often without preparation. He rises, arranges his cloak, and begins. At once he has everything almost equally ready at hand. Meanings that you never saw are suggested to you, and words—what words they are!—exquisitely chosen and polished. The wideness of his reading, his great practice in writing, are clearly shown in these unprepared displays. His preface is to the point, his narrative is lucid, his attack spirited, his summing up forcible, his rhetorical ornament noble. In a word, he teaches, delights, and affects you; and you cannot decide which of the three he does best. His reflections are frequent; frequent, too, his syllogisms, as well as condensed and carefully finished—no small merit to attain even in a written style. His memory is beyond belief; he repeats from far back what he has spoken extempore, and does not miss a single word. Such is the habit of excellence to which he has reached by study and practice, for night and day he does nothing, hears nothing, says nothing else. He has passed his sixtieth year, and is still a scholar, and nothing more. Than this class of men, indeed, I know nothing more single-hearted, more

genuine, or more excellent. For we who have to go through the rough work of the forum and of real disputes contract something, however unwilling we may be, of evil cleverness. The school, the lecture-room, the imaginary case, the whole affair, in short, is innocent and harmless, and quite as full of enjoyment, especially to the old. For my part I think Isæus not only the most eloquent but the happiest of men ; and you," he adds to his correspondent, "unless you are anxious to make his acquaintance, must be made of stone or iron."

In this literary and learned society Pliny found, it is evident, a very keen and genuine enjoyment. We must perhaps take with a certain reservation his lamentations over the distraction of business, public and private, which kept him from the learned leisure in which he delighted. He was fond, it is evident, of the distinction which was given by office ; he rejoiced in the triumphs which he won, and which he does not fail to describe to his correspondents, in the courts of law. Nevertheless he really loved literature. He combined indeed, with no little success, the character of a man of letters, a patron, and a critic. Of his authorship we speak elsewhere. His patronage was shown, as we have seen, in substantial help to authors. Such help was, of course, but a small matter to a man of wealth so large. There was more of real value in the genuine sympathy which he felt with their productions—a sympathy the want of which has often made offensive the liberality of the most munificent patron. He was always ready with advice and encouragement, and made it a special duty to be present at the public

readings, to be described in the next chapter. This help was of a kind which no mere man of wealth could give. Pliny's countenance and approval, as a man of wide culture and genuine taste, must have been highly valued. His criticism, indeed, we can hardly help thinking, as we read the high compliments which he pays to the authors whom he mentions, must have been of a very kindly character. Yet in the cases where we are able to compare his literary opinion of *contemporary* writers—the true test, it is almost needless to say, of critical sagacity—with the verdict of succeeding time, we find him to have been right. He dismisses with a very few words of modified praise the tedious heroics of Silius Italicus, while he recognises the wit and brilliance which have given Martial the first place among epigrammatists, and fully appreciated in Tacitus the solid qualities of the greatest of Roman historians. And in more than one of his letters, where he deals with general literary topics, the soundness of his judgment is evident. Nothing, for instance, could be more judicious than the literary advice which he gives in the following letter :* “You ask me what I think should be your method of study in the retirement which you have been now for some time enjoying. As useful as anything, as it is frequently recommended, is the practice of translating either your Greek into Latin, or your Latin into Greek. By practising this you acquire propriety and dignity of expression, an abundant choice of the beauties of style, power in description, and in the imitation of the best

* Epist. vii. 9.

models a facility of creating such models for yourself. Besides, what may escape you when you read, cannot escape you when you translate. From this follows a quick appreciation of beauty and sound taste. There is no reason why you should not write about the subjects which you have been already reading, keeping to the same matter and line of argument, as if you were a rival; should then compare it with what you have read, and carefully consider whether the author has been the happier of the two, and wherefore. You may congratulate yourself much if sometimes you have done better, but should be much ashamed if he is always superior. Sometimes you may select even very famous passages, and compete with what you select. The competition is daring enough, but, as it is private, cannot be called impudent. Sometimes you can go over a speech again, when it has passed from your memory, retaining much, omitting more, inserting some things, and rewriting others. This is, I know, a laborious and tedious task, but its very difficulties make it useful; so hard is it to work one's self up again into the old heat, to recover the energy which has once suffered break or interruption, and, worse than all, to put new limbs into a body already complete without disturbing the old. . . . Sometimes you should take a subject from history, and you might give more care to the composition of your letters. In speaking, you will often find a necessity for passages of description in the style of history—nay, even in that of poetry. From letters you acquire a simple and terse style. You will do quite right again in refreshing yourself with poetry; I do not say with

any long and continuous work, but with something neat and short—a most appropriate variety in occupation and business of whatever kind. . . . Perhaps I have given you more than you wanted. Yet I have left out one point. I have not told you what I think you should read; though, indeed, I did tell you when I told you what you should write. Remember to be careful in your choice of authors of every kind. They say that one ought to read much, but not many books.”

There is sound sense in all this; and in the following letter, with which this chapter may be concluded, we have a genuine expression of feeling:—

“I find my joy and my solace in literature. There is no gladness that this cannot increase, no sorrow that it cannot lessen. Troubled as I am by the ill-health of my wife, by the dangerous condition—sometimes, alas! by the death—of my friends, I fly to my studies as the one alleviation of my fears. They do me this service—they make me understand my troubles better, and bear them more patiently. It is my custom, whatever I purpose to publish, previously to try by the judgment of my friends, of whom you stand among the first. Pray give your best attention to the book which you will receive with this letter, for I fear that I, in my sorrow, have scarcely given mine to it. I could so far command my grief as to write; not so far as to write with an unoccupied and cheerful mind. Certainly there is a pleasure in these pursuits, but they themselves prosper best when the heart is light.”

CHAPTER VII.

PUBLIC READINGS.

WE shall be much mistaken if we form our ideas of the supply of books in Rome from what we know of the scarcity and costliness of this article in the age that intervened between the fall of the Empire and the invention of printing, or perhaps it should rather be said, the revival of learning. In mediæval Europe, and more particularly among the Northern nations, manuscripts were among the rarest of the possessions of the wealthy. The sale of them was negotiated with as much solemnity as was the sale of an estate ; the most solid security was exacted when they were lent. A score of them constituted a library such as individuals or even corporations were proud to possess. But in this, as in other matters, European civilisation had greatly retrograded from what it was during the first centuries of the Christian era. In the days of Pliny, at least, as we know from the express testimony of a contemporary,* copies of popular books were produced

* Martial tells a friend that a book which he had lately published ("a slender book," he calls it ; it might be printed in

in great numbers, and at a very cheap rate. But while this proves both that there existed a considerable class of readers, and that the mechanical means of satisfying their demand were to be found in much completeness, it is easy enough to see that there was nothing like the thoroughly-organised system of communication between the writer and the public that has been created in modern times. It is not to be forgotten—though this, of course, is not the chief thing to be considered—that the manuscript was less attractive, less handy, and, in short, less readable, than the printed book. An ordinary Roman could, of course, peruse with ease what it now takes a practised scholar to decipher; but it is impossible not to believe that something was wanting to the pleasure of the reader when there was no distinction in the size of letters, no separation between words, and none of the perpetual help of punctuation. More important, however, was the question of publishing.

This now is a process sufficiently simple and easy. There is a large class of men whose business it is to introduce an author to his readers. The competition between them is so keen that probably no book of merit, a few exceptional cases allowed for, fails to obtain an introduction to the world. Such facilities, if they were not altogether wanting to the literary men

about thirty-two pages of the volume which the reader has in his hands) could be purchased for four sesterces (about equivalent to tenpence in our money); and that if this price seemed too high, a cheaper copy might be procured for half that price, “and yet,” he adds, “the bookseller will get a profit.”

of Rome, were certainly not so fully developed. There were, indeed, booksellers both there and in the chief provincial cities. The poet Horace has preserved the name of a firm—"Sosii Brothers," as we should put it—who were the most eminent of their class in his time; and one of the passages in which he speaks of them may possibly be understood as meaning that they were accustomed to purchase works from authors as publishers now purchase a copyright. "Such a book," he says, speaking of one which possesses certain excellences, "earns money from the Sosii,"—a phrase, however, which might be used if these Sosii were merely booksellers, and paid over to the author the money which they had received. "Booksellers" (*bibliopolæ*) they are certainly called; and though they may have sometimes acted the part of publishers, and probably did so in arranging for the copying of books, and the ornamentation of the copies, it is quite clear that an intending author did not find matters made so simple and easy as, by the organisation of the trade in books, they now are. To put the matter shortly, there was no market in which the value of his wares might be readily appraised. The want of this compelled him to appeal directly to the public which he wished to address. He had to learn from the opinion of a larger circle than that of his immediate friends, whether his book was worth publishing—a process which, we must remember, was difficult and costly; and, in the event of a favourable judgment, he wished to make the intended publication known as widely as possible. To gain these objects, he would "recite" or read his

compositions in public. We do not hear of the practice in the days of the Republic, when men were, we may suppose, too busy for such things ; but both Horace and Ovid speak of it, and the allusions become more frequent when we come to the time of Pliny and his contemporaries. The method of proceeding may be described in a few words. The first care was to provide some place capable of holding a large audience. Sometimes, in the case, we may suppose, of writers who had already acquired a reputation, the temple of Apollo, the public library of Rome, was obtained for the purpose. Sometimes a convenient room had to be hired. But an author, if his own house did not contain the necessary accommodation, was generally able to find a wealthy friend or patron who would supply what was wanted. Pliny mentions with praise one of his friends, Titinius Capito, as always ready to lend his house for this purpose. "If you want to recite," cries Juvenal, "Maculonus will lend you his house, will range his freedmen on the furthest benches, and will put in the proper places his strong-lunged friends ; but he will not give what it costs to hire the benches, and to set up the galleries, and to fill the stage with chairs." The author's next care, we thus learn, after finding his room, was to fit it with seats for his audience ; the chairs, we may presume, being meant, like those which fill the platform at our own public meetings, for distinguished personages or private friends, while the benches accommodated the general public. For himself, the reader provided a high chair and desk ; sometimes he sought to commend himself

to his listeners by adorning his person with unusual splendour. It is not uncommon among ourselves to see a lecturer, a reader, or even a preacher, seeking to attract his hearers by the brilliancy of a diamond ring, or setting himself off to the best advantage by carefully-combed hair and a new coat ; but we are taken at once into a totally different sphere of manners when we read that the reciter would sometimes put a gay-coloured hood on his head, bandages on his ears, and a woollen comforter round his neck. It still remained to secure an audience. The author, if he was a man of wealth and position, might reckon with certainty on a considerable number of hearers, of whose presence, and even of whose applause, he might be sure. The freedmen, whose obligation to their patrons was, notwithstanding their manumission, of no slight kind, and the whole crowd of clients, some of them men whom we are surprised to find in a position seemingly so humiliating, who were accustomed to pay him their court, and to receive from his hands the dole which acknowledged their service, would be sure to attend, and would scarcely fail to be unanimous in their judgment of the performance. If he was indebted to a patron for a room, the loan would include, as we have seen, the use of the accustomed body of *claqueurs*. A city like Rome would be sure to furnish a number of listeners, some of them, of course, mere idlers, who were willing to kill the time by listening to a poem, a play, or a history, if there was no chariot-race or show of gladiators to be seen ; some—doubtless in the case of a man of note, many—who were attracted by a genuine

interest in literature. Around the reader was the array of his personal friends, whose attendance, indeed, on these occasions was one of the chief, and sometimes, it may be believed, one of the most laborious duties which society demanded from men of good position at Rome. "I must beg you to excuse me this particular day," writes Pliny to a friend. "Titinius Capito means to give a reading, and I cannot say whether I am more bound or more desirous to hear him. . . . He lends his house to readers; and, whether the reading be at his own home or elsewhere, he shows a remarkable kindness in making himself one of the audience: me certainly he has never failed, whenever he has happened to be in town." We have here a hint of what indeed must on reflection be sufficiently obvious, that the demand made by these readings on the time of a busy man, or a man of many friends, and made in many cases by writers of very moderate talent, was felt to be exceedingly onerous. Horace complains of the "troublesome reader," from whom learned and unlearned alike fled in terror, and who bored to death the luckless listeners who could not escape from him; and Juvenal, in his first Satire, apologetically introduces himself to the public by declaring that he could not always be a listener, "wearied as he had so often been by the 'The-seid' of the hoarse Codrus;"—the epithet "hoarse" suggesting with significant force the *length* of the poem which the audience had to endure. We must remember, indeed, that a man of education at Rome had not his literary appetite satiated with the abundance of

reading which constitutes one of the most serious burdens of modern life. Books, if not positively scarce, did not crowd upon him in overwhelming numbers; and the "light troops" of literature—magazines and pamphlets and newspapers—were altogether unknown. Still we cannot entirely withhold our sympathy from the offender of whose conduct Pliny complains in an amusing letter to his friend Senecio. "This year," he says, "has brought us a great crop of poets. During the whole month of April, there was scarcely a day on which some one did not give a reading. I am delighted to see that literature flourishes, that the powers of our writers have the opportunity of displaying themselves: yet audiences come but slowly to listen. Many persons sit in the lounging-places, and waste in gossip the time that they should spend in listening. They even have news brought to them whether the reader has entered, whether he has spoken his preface, whether he has got through a considerable part of his manuscript. Then at last they come, but come slowly and reluctantly: even then they do not stop, but go away before the end; some, indeed, in secret and by stealth, others with perfect openness and freedom. Good heavens! our fathers can remember how the Emperor Claudius, walking one day in the palace, and hearing a great shouting, inquired the cause. They told him that Nonianus was reading; whereupon he entered the room, wholly unexpected by the reader. Now, the idlest of men, after having been invited long before to attend, and reminded over and over again of the engagement, either do not come at all, or, if

they come, complain of having 'lost a day !'—the fact being that they have *not* lost it. I," continues Pliny, "have failed scarcely a single reader. True, most of them were my friends : and, indeed, there are scarcely any who love literature who are not also on friendly terms with me. This is the reason why I have stayed longer in town than I had intended to do. At last I am at liberty to seek my country retirement, and to write something—something *which I shall not read* ; for I do not wish to seem to have been obliging rather than listening to my friends."

Sometimes it happened that one or other of the unwilling auditors, whom a friendly compulsion had brought to assist in proceedings which did not interest him, would avenge himself by an unwelcome interruption. We have spoken of Passennus Paullus, a writer of elegiac verses, modelled after the compositions of his townsman and relative, Propertius. Passennus had collected a number of friends to hear him read a new volume ; among them a lawyer, Javolenus Priscus by name, with whom he was on very intimate terms. The poet began, "Priscus, you bid me ;"—but was astounded by a sudden interruption from his friend,—"*I do not bid you.*" We may illustrate this incident by supposing that Pope is reading in public his "Essay on Man," and has got as far as the opening words, "Come now, my St John," when St John (Bolingbroke), who is one of his audience, interrupts him with "*Come, indeed !—not I.*" "Javolenus," says Pliny, "is a man of doubtful sanity, though he takes a share in public business, is summoned to consultations, and

even gives opinions on civil law." The fact is, that he was a very distinguished lawyer, some of whose legal wisdom is still preserved in the Pandects of Justinian. Possibly, in a fit of absence, while his mind was wandering to scenes more congenial and familiar, he was startled by hearing his name, and made the ludicrous reply which Pliny has preserved. Or if Passennus was one of the poets who had occupied with their readings nearly every day in April,—one of the busiest months, it must be remembered, for lawyers,—and Javolenus had been dragged from court to attend them, his "*I don't bid you*" may have been the expression of a pent-up annoyance, which no feelings of friendship could restrain. However this may be, we can very well imagine that, as Pliny says, the interruption threw something of a damp on the proceedings; and we can appreciate the wisdom of his advice, that "those who mean to read in public should not only be sane themselves, but also bring sane friends to hear them." Pliny's own practice in this matter he himself describes in a letter which shows both good sense and good feeling.* He had been writing, it seems, some poems of a lighter kind. "I chose," he continues, "for producing these, the most seasonable time and place. To accustom them in good time to be heard by listeners that are taking their ease, and at the dinner-table, I collected my friends in the month of July, when the law courts have least to do, and put writing-desks before their chairs. It so happened that on the morning of the day I was called away to an unexpected case in court.

* Epist. viii. 21.

This gave me opportunity for some words of preface. I begged my friends not to think that it showed me wanting in respect to what I had in hand if, when meaning to read, though it was only to friends and to a small audience (another word for friends), I did not abstain from the business of the forum. I added, that even in writing I followed this order—put my friendship before my pleasures, my business before my amusements, and wrote firstly for my friends, secondly for myself. My book contained a variety of compositions and metres. 'Tis thus that I am accustomed, trusting but little to my talent, to avoid the risk of being wearisome. My reading lasted two days. The approval of my audience made this necessary; and yet, while some readers pass over part of their volume, and make a merit of passing it over, I pass over nothing, and tell my hearers as much. I read everything, because I want to correct everything,—a thing which those who read extracts only cannot do. The other plan, you may say, is more modest, and possibly more respectful. Well, but this is more honest and more affectionate. Genuine affection is so confident of affection in return, as not to be afraid of wearying a friend. Besides, what benefit do one's companions confer if they assemble only for the sake of pleasing themselves? It is very like indolence, when a man would sooner hear his friend read a book already good, than help to make it good. Doubtless, in your general affection for me, you will want to read as soon as possible this book, which is still 'fermenting.' You shall read it, but after it has passed through my hands again. This was my reason for reading it aloud."

CHAPTER VIII.

COMUM, PLINY'S BIRTHPLACE—HIS LIVELY INTEREST IN ITS WELFARE.

COMUM, as has been said, was in all probability the birthplace of both the elder and the younger Pliny. There is much of direct and indirect evidence to connect them with the place. Tradition is distinctly in favour of it. The numerous allusions which are made to it in the letters, and the fact that our friend had several little villas on the margin of the Lake of Como, seem to point to the same conclusion.

Comum was in that northern part of Italy which was known to the Romans as Cisalpine Gaul. It was at the extremity of one of the two southern branches of the Lake of Como, about 28 miles to the north of Milan. It passed out of the hands of the Gauls into the possession of the Romans in B.C. 196, when a great victory, won by the famous Marcellus, the conqueror of Syracuse, over the united strength of the Gauls, carried the Roman territory as far as the foot of the Alps, and made Como and Milan Roman towns. Julius Cæsar added five thousand new colonists to the pop-

ulation of the place, and from that time it became one of the most prosperous towns of the north of Italy. It had several natural advantages. Its beautiful and attractive situation at the foot of the Alps, and on the shores of a lovely lake, was greatly in its favour: it also lay very conveniently in the way of a much-frequented route across the Rhaetian Alps. The elder Pliny speaks of its iron-foundries as being the most famous in Italy. Thus it happily combined the various elements which make up the prosperity of a provincial town.

Pliny often in his letters alludes to the picturesque Lake of Como, and seems to have taken peculiar delight in its scenery. He calls it once or twice "our Larius," the name by which Virgil mentions it. One may fairly infer that he would hardly have spoken of it in this manner, had not he and his family been long and closely connected with the neighbourhood. Many a rich Roman had his villa on its banks, which, as they rose in a somewhat steep ascent from the water, were clothed with olive-woods, vineyards, and chestnut-groves. The lower slopes presented to the eye an abundance of rural wealth, and the quiet beauty which is always its accompaniment; above, at no great distance, were all the wildness and grandeur of mountain scenery.

There are some pleasing touches in the following letter, written, as it would appear, to a fellow-townsmen of Pliny, who is encouraged to use so delightful a retreat as Comum as a stimulus to literary work:—

PLINY TO CANINIUS RUFUS.*

“How is our dear darling Comum looking? Tell me about that lovely villa, about the colonnade where it is always spring, about the shady plane-tree walk, about the green and flowery banks of that little stream, and of the charming lake below, which serves at once the purpose of use and beauty. What have you to tell me about the carriage-drive, as firm as it is soft, and the sunny bath-room, and your dining-rooms, both for a large and a select circle of friends, and your various chambers of rest and repose by day or night? Do these delightful attractions share you by turns, or are you, as usual, called away from them by the pressure of important business engagements connected with your property? If all these delights have you to themselves, you are indeed most fortunate; if not, you are like most other people. Why not leave (for it is high time) these wretched degrading cares to others, and give yourself up in the deep repose of such a snug retreat to reading and study? Make these your business and your recreation, your labour and your rest, the subjects of your waking and even of your sleeping thoughts. Work at something and produce something which will be yours for ever. All your other possessions will pass from one master to another; this alone, when once yours, will be yours for ever. I know the temper and the genius which I am seeking to stimulate. Only strive to think yourself what the

* Epist. i. 3.

world will think you, if you do yourself justice.—Farewell.”

The lively interest which Pliny took in his native place is pleasantly attested by the following letter :—

PLINY TO ANNIUS SEVERUS.*

“Out of a legacy that was left me I have just bought a statue of Corinthian bronze. It is small, but thoroughly clever and done to the life—at least, in my judgment, which, in matters of this sort, and perhaps of every sort, is not worth much. However, I really do see the merits of this statue. It is a nude figure, and its faults, if it has any, are as clearly observable as its beauties. It represents an old man standing up. The bones, the muscles, the veins, and the very wrinkles, all look like life. The hair is thin, the forehead broad, the face shrunken, the throat lank, the arms hang down feebly, the chest is fallen in, and the belly sunk. Looked at from behind, the figure is just as expressive of old age. The bronze, to judge from its colour, has the marks of great antiquity. In short, it is in all respects a work which would strike the eye of a connoisseur, and which cannot fail to charm an ordinary observer. This induced me, novice as I am in such matters, to buy it. However, I bought it not to put in my own house (for I have never had there a Corinthian bronze), but with the intention of placing it in some conspicuous situation in the place of my birth, perhaps in the temple of Jupiter, which has the best claim to it. It is a gift well worthy of a temple

* Epist. iii. 6.

and of a god. Do you, with that kind attention which you always give to my requests, undertake this matter, and order a pedestal to be made for it out of any marble you please, and let my name, and, if you think fit, my various titles, be engraven upon it. I will send you the statue by the first person who will not object to the trouble ; or, what I am sure you will like better, I will bring it myself, for I intend, if I can get away from business, to take a run into your parts. I see joy in your looks when I promise to come ; but your joy will soon go when I tell you that my visit will be only for a few days, for the work which keeps me here will prevent my making a longer stay.—Farewell.”

The two following letters will show that Pliny's anxiety for the welfare of his native town took a much higher range than that of a simply graceful act of liberality. He did his best to make provision for the enlightenment of the inhabitants, by presenting them with a library and helping them to establish a school. It appears that on the first occasion he made a speech to the burgesses of Comum, in which he no doubt dwelt on the pleasure and advantages of intellectual culture ; and in the following letter he explains the motives which prompted him to this particular act of munificence. He mentions in it an interesting circumstance, which has about it a singularly modern character. In the spirit of the benevolent patron, he has established a fund for the maintenance and education of the children of distressed gentlefolks :—

PLINY TO POMPEIUS SATURNINUS.*

“Nothing could have been more seasonable than the letter in which you begged me to send you some of my literary efforts, as at the time I had intended to do so. You have, in fact, put spurs into the willing horse, and saved yourself the excuse of refusing the trouble, and me the awkwardness of asking the favour. Without any hesitation, then, I avail myself of your offer, and you must now take the consequences of it without reluctance. But don’t expect anything new from such a lazy man as myself. I am going to ask you to revise once more the speech I made to my fellow-townsmen when I dedicated the public library to their use. I remember that you have already given me a few general criticisms, but I now beg of you not only to take a general view of the whole speech, but to criticise it in detail. When you have done this, I shall still be at liberty to publish or to keep it back. And perhaps my doubtfulness in the matter will be determined one way or the other as the process of correction goes on; for careful revision will either show it to be not worth publishing, or will make it fit to be published. Yet my chief difficulty in deciding arises not so much from the character of the composition as from its subject-matter. The style may be ever so plain and unpretentious, yet it is embarrassing to modesty to have to speak not only of my ancestors’ munificence, but also of my own. It is a dangerous and slippery situation, though necessity draws one into it. People do not

* Epist. i. 7.

listen very patiently to the praise which we bestow on others ; how difficult, then, must it be to get a favourable hearing when we have to talk about ourselves or our ancestors ! Virtue by itself is apt to be disliked—especially so, when glory and distinction attend it ; and the world is never so little likely to misrepresent or to carp at good actions, as when they pass unobserved and without applause. Hence I have often asked myself, Is this composition, whatever its merits, due to my own vanity or to regard for others ? I see that many things which may be quite proper and necessary at a particular time, lose all their usefulness and grace when the occasion is past. In the case before us, what could have been more useful than to explain at length the grounds and motives of my liberality ? First, it engaged my mind in good and ennobling thoughts ; it made me take a lengthened survey of the nobleness of such thoughts ; then, it effectually guarded me from that repentance which is sure to follow on an impulsive act of generosity. All this trained me to the habit of despising mere wealth. I find that all men naturally like to keep what they have got ; for myself, a love of liberality has been the result of long and matured reflection, and has set me free from that slavery to avarice which is so common in the world. My bounty, I thought, would be the more praiseworthy, as it would be recognised as the result of deliberate purpose and not of sudden impulse. Add to all this, that what I engaged to do was not to exhibit games or a gladiatorial show, but to establish an annual fund for the maintenance and education of poor people of respectable family.

Pleasures which merely appeal to the eye and the ear, so far from wanting a speech to recommend them, often need to be discouraged by eloquent argument ; whereas, if you can induce a man to undertake the tiresome work of education, you must attract him not only by pay, but also by the most seductive allurements of a persuasive rhetoric. If physicians find that they must coax their patients into adopting a wholesome though perhaps unpleasant regimen, how much more ought a man who, out of regard to the public welfare, has to recommend a highly useful but not very popular benefaction, to win the people over by persuasiveness of argument, especially when, like myself, he has to plead for an institution solely for the benefit of those who are parents, and to do his best to persuade a large number who are yet childless to wait patiently for a privilege in which only a few can immediately share ? As, however, at the time I thought of the public good more than of my own personal reputation, and with that view explained my motives, so now I am afraid that if I publish my speech, people will say that I do it for my own credit rather than for the good of others. Persons who confer public benefits, and then afterwards set them off in speeches, seem to have conferred them simply in order to talk about them. In my own case, a special circumstance weighs much with me. My speech was not delivered before an assembly of all the people of the town, but only before the corporation in the town-hall. I fear it would hardly be consistent in me, after having avoided popular applause when I made the speech, to appear now to covet the same applause by

publishing it, and, though I thus kept out of the town-hall the mass of the people for whose benefit the library was given, to be afterwards thrusting a parade of my liberality on those to whom it can do no good except by way of example. Such are my reasons for hesitating in this matter. Your judgment, which I shall esteem a sufficient sanction for my conduct, will decide me.—Farewell.”

Still more interesting, because simpler and less self-conscious, is the following letter, in which he describes his offer to his townspeople to contribute largely to the establishment of a school for their youth :—

PLINY TO TACITUS.*

“ I am glad to hear of your safe arrival at Rome. I am always anxious to see you, and especially just now. I shall stay a few more days at Tusculum, that I may finish a little work I have in hand ; for I am afraid that if I break it off when I have all but completed it, I shall find it difficult to take it up again. Meanwhile, that I may lose no time, I send off this letter, so to speak, in advance of me, to ask a favour of you which I shall soon ask in person. First, let me tell you the occasion of it. Being lately at my native town, a young lad, son of one of my neighbours, came to pay me a complimentary call. ‘ Do you go to school ? ’ I asked him. ‘ Yes,’ he replied. ‘ Where ? ’ ‘ At Mediolanum.’ † ‘ Why not here ? ’ ‘ Because,’ said his father, who had come with him, ‘ we have no professors here.’

* Epist. iv. 17.

† Milan.

‘No professors ! Why, surely,’ I replied, ‘it would be very much to the interest of all you fathers’ (and, fortunately, several fathers heard what I said) ‘to have your sons educated here rather than anywhere else. Where can they live more pleasantly than in their own town ? or be bred up more virtuously than under their parents’ eyes, or at less expense than at home ? What an easy matter it would be, by a general contribution, to hire teachers, and to apply to their salaries the money which you now spend on lodging, journeys, and all you have to purchase for your sons at a distance from home. I have no children myself ; I look on my native town in the light of a child or a parent, and I am ready to advance a third part of any sum which you think fit to raise for the purpose. I would even promise the whole amount, were I not afraid that my benefaction might be spoilt by jobbery, as I see happens in many towns where teachers are engaged at the public expense. There is only one way of meeting this evil. If the choice of professors is left solely to the parents, the obligation to choose rightly will be enforced by the necessity of having to pay towards the professors’ salaries. Those who would perhaps be careless in administering another’s bounty, will certainly be careful about their own expenses, and will see that none but those who deserve it receive any money, when they must at the same time receive theirs as well. So take counsel together, and be encouraged by my example, and be assured that the greater my proportion of the expense shall be, the better shall I be pleased. You can do nothing more for the good of

your children, or more acceptable to your native town. Your sons will thus receive their education in the place of their birth, and be accustomed from their infancy to love and to cling to their native soil. I trust that you may secure such eminent teachers that the neighbouring towns will be glad to draw their learning from hence; so that, as you now send your children elsewhere to be educated, other people's children may hereafter flock hither for instruction.'

"I thought it advisable to explain the whole affair to you circumstantially, that you may see more clearly how much obliged I should be if you will undertake what I request. I entreat you, in consideration of the importance of the matter, to look out among the multitude of men of letters whom the reputation of your genius draws round you, some teachers to whom we may apply, but without as yet tying ourselves down to any particular man. I leave everything to the parents; I wish them to judge, and select as they think fit; I take on myself nothing but the trouble and expense. If any one shall be found who has confidence in his own ability, let him go there; but he must understand that he goes with no assurance but that derived from his own merit."

There is an inscription at Como in honour of a grammarian named Septicianus, which seems to imply that Pliny's proposal to the townspeople was accepted, and bore fruit.

CHAPTER IX.

PLINY'S FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

IT is not too much to say that the glimpses which we get of Pliny's domestic life—of the man as he lived among his family and friends—make as pleasant a picture as anything of the kind that is to be found in classical literature. There are letters, indeed, of Cicero which are full of the same kind of interest; but, unhappily, we know too much about Cicero. It is impossible, for instance, as we read the affectionate language which he addresses to his wife Terentia, to help recollecting that in later life he divorced this same Terentia, and married a ward of his own; and the recollection, though it need not make us doubt the sincerity of his language, cannot but diminish the pleasure with which we regard the writer in this aspect of his life. It might, of course, be objected, that it is well for Pliny's character, and for our own satisfaction, that we know far less about him; but it is a fact that all that we do know is of the pleasantest kind. There is not a syllable in what he says about his wife, his kindred, his friends, that we could wish to be changed;

not a syllable that hints at his being other than an affectionate, just, blameless man. Nor is there from other sources a breath of scandal against his name. One is apt to think, after reading such terrible books as Suetonius's 'Lives of the Cæsars' and Juvenal's Satires, that there could not have been such a thing as pure and happy family-life in Rome; and it is refreshing to correct such an impression by turning to the picture that we get in these letters, and to feel assured that, in the darkest and worst times, there were homes such as we know our English homes to be, kind masters whose hearts the curse of slavery had not hardened, single-minded friends, pure women, and faithful husbands. Of Pliny's father we know absolutely nothing. His mother appears once only—in the letters describing the eruption of Vesuvius—though she is not unfrequently alluded to. What we read there is enough to satisfy us that there was a strong affection between the mother and the son. We also learn that she was somewhat infirm, and we may gather from his language here and elsewhere that she was not alive at the time (97-107) to which the Letters are to be ascribed. That Pliny had married some time previous to the year A.D. 96, we learn from the fact that he then held a sacred office which involved marriage, and from his own statement, that that year—the year, it will be remembered, of the accession of Nerva—found him suffering from a recent bereavement in the loss of his wife. He makes no other mention of this lady. We do not even know her name. His second wife, Calpurnia, is comparatively well known to us. We

cannot do better than let the reader see the letter,* written, it would seem, not long after marriage, in which he describes her good qualities to her aunt, Calpurnia Hispulla, herself an old friend of the Pliny family, who had had the charge of her education :—

“It is because you are a model of family affections, because you loved, as well as he loved you, that most excellent and affectionate brother of yours, and still love his daughter, showing to her the affection not only of an aunt, but also of her dead father, I am sure that you will feel the greatest joy in knowing that she is proving herself worthy of her father, worthy of you, worthy of her grandfather. Her intelligence is very great, very great her frugality ; in loving me she shows how good a heart she has. And she has now a fondness for letters which springs from her affection for me. She keeps my books by her, loves to read them, even learns them by heart. How anxious she is when she sees that I am going to speak, how delighted when I have spoken ! She takes care to have messengers to let her know how far I have convinced, how often moved my audience to applaud, and what has been the result of the trial. If ever I give a reading, she sits close by, separated from the audience by a curtain, and drinks in my praises with the greediest ears. She sings and sets to the harp my verses ; and it is not any professor who teaches her, but love, who is the best of masters. These things make me feel a most certain hope that there will be a perpetual and ever-growing harmony between us. For it is not youth or

* *Epist. iv. 19.*

personal beauty that she loves in me—things that by degrees decline with old age—but my fame. This is exactly what becomes one brought up by your hands, and instructed by your teaching—one who can never have seen anything in your companionship but what was pure and honourable, and who learnt to love me from your descriptions. It was you, you who used to look upon my mother as upon a parent, you who trained me from early boyhood, you who praised me, you who predicted that I should be the man that now I appear to be. So we vie with each other in thanking you—I for your having given her to me, she for your having given me to her; for we seem each to have chosen the other.”

To Calpurnia herself we find addressed three charming love-letters* from her husband, which we shall not apologise for giving entire :—

“I have never complained more than now of my occupations, which did not allow me to accompany you when you were going into Campania to recruit your health, or even to be quick in following you. I am at this time especially anxious to be with you, to learn from my own eyes whether you are growing stronger and stouter, and whether you make your way through these luxurious and pleasure-seeking regions without meeting anything to annoy you. Were you quite well, I could not have you away from me without some apprehension. There is a certain fear and anxiety in knowing nothing for a time about her whom one loves most ardently. As it is, when I consider both my own absence

* Epist. vi. 4 ; vi. 7 ; vii. 5!

and your feeble health, I am grievously troubled by vague and various anxieties. I dread everything, fancy everything, and, as is natural to those who fear, conjure up the very things that I most dread. I entreat you, therefore, the more earnestly, to do what you can for my fears, by writing once, nay, even twice, a-day. I shall be more at ease while I am reading your letters, though when I have read them, I shall immediately feel my fears again."

"You write that you are no little troubled by my absence, and find your only solace in making my books take my place, and setting them where I ought to be. I am glad that you miss me; I am glad that you find some rest in these alleviations. For my part, I read and re-read your letters, taking them up in my hands many times, as though they were newly come; but this only stirs in me a keener longing for you. What sweetness must there be in the talk of one whose letters contain so much that pleases! Write, nevertheless, as often as you can, though this, while it delights, still tortures me."

"You will not believe what a longing for you possesses me. The chief cause of this is my love; and then we have not grown used to be apart. So it comes to pass that I spend a great part of the night in a wakefulness that dwells on your image; and that by day, when the hours return at which I was wont to visit you, my feet take me, as is so truly said, to your chamber; and that at last, sick and sad at heart, like a

lover whom his mistress shuts out, I depart from the empty threshold. The only time that is free from these torments is when I am being worn out by the business of the courts and the suits of my friends. Judge you what must be my life when I find my repose in toil, my solace in wretchedness and anxiety."

This wife Pliny nearly lost by a dangerous illness, brought on by a miscarriage. She seems, however, to have recovered her health, for she was with him during his two years' stay in his provincial government. It was apparently about the end of that period when she was summoned to Italy by the death of her grandfather. Pliny, in one of his letters to the Emperor, excuses himself for having given his wife a *diploma* (a sort of free pass, entitling the bearer to use horses and carriages belonging to the state). He had never before, he says, given one except on the Emperor's affairs; but his wife had heard of the death of her grandfather, and wished to make all haste she could to join her aunt (the Calpurnia Hispulla before mentioned), and he had given her the document without waiting for the Emperor's sanction, which, indeed, could not have been given till it was too late to be of use. Trajan's answer is, as we should expect, kind and approving.

It would seem that Pliny had no children—that is, if we may argue from the absence of any allusion of the kind in the Letters, except, indeed, when he writes to Calpurnia's aunt and to her grandfather about the disappointment which he and his wife had experienced. "You cannot desire" (he writes to the old

man, his father-in-law's father, or *prosocer*, as the Latin conveniently expresses it) "great-grandchildren more eagerly than I desire children—children to whom I seem likely to leave an easy road to honour, both on your side and on mine—a name that is widely known, and a nobility of no new origin. The gods grant that they may be born, and change this sorrow of ours into joy." We should hardly have failed to hear if their hopes had been fulfilled. Childlessness was common, as we may gather from many indications, among the upper class of Romans.

Calpurnia's father had died many years before her marriage. Her grandfather, Calpurnius Fabatus, survived, as we have seen, to the year 105. He must have been then a very old man, as more than forty years before, in the days of Nero, he had had a narrow escape from a charge brought against him by one of the informers of the time. He was, it appears, a native, or, at all events, an inhabitant of Comum, and therefore a fellow-townsmen of Pliny. We also find that he was a man of wealth. We have a letter congratulating him on having dedicated, in the name of himself and of his son (who was then dead), a very handsome chapel in Comum, and in having promised a further sum of money for the ornamentation of the gates. In another letter Pliny sends his compliments to the old man on the occasion of his birthday, and takes the opportunity of telling him that he had inspected a villa of his in Campania. A third letter, written, like the others, in a very affectionate tone, promises an early visit on the part of Pliny and

his wife. This letter will be found at the close of the next chapter.

The subject of Pliny's family must not be dismissed without a brief mention of the humbler members of it, the freedmen and slaves, for whom he seems to have entertained a kindly feeling which was not always found in Roman masters, and which he does not describe without something of apology in his tone. "I know," he says, writing to a friend, "how mildly you rule your household, and so will more frankly confess to you how indulgently I treat my own people." These words are the introduction to a letter which he writes on behalf of his freedman, Zosimus. Zosimus, who was of Greek extraction—descended, one may guess, through more than one generation of slaves, from the inhabitant of some luckless Greek city which had taken the wrong side in the civil wars—was an accomplished man, with a special gift for comic acting. He had suffered from hemorrhage, brought on by the exercise of his art, and had been sent by his master, or, we should rather say, patron, into Egypt. From this country he had returned apparently restored in health, but exertion had brought on a partial relapse. Pliny writes to his friend Paullinus to request that the invalid might be allowed to take up his abode for a time on an estate which the latter possessed at Forum Julii (now Fréjus, in the Riviera). It is interesting to see the Roman using the same *sanatoria* as are now in request among consumptive patients. Another noteworthy point is an arrangement which the letter suggests, almost as a matter of course, by which Zosi-

mus was to be quartered at the expense of Paullinus or his tenants. "Will you," it runs, "give direction to your people to let him have the use of your house and buildings, and to furnish him with supplies if he wants anything. A physician he certainly will want. I will give him, when he sets out, a sum for travelling expenses sufficient to carry him to your place."

Another letter speaks so well for the writer's kindness of heart, that we shall give it entire.*

"I am much troubled by illnesses, and, alas ! by deaths, among my own people, some of them quite young men. I have two consolations, not equal indeed to so great a sorrow, yet consolations still. One is my willingness to give them their freedom. I count myself to have lost, not altogether before their time, those who were free when I lost them. The other is, that I allow even my slaves to make what may be called wills, and that I treat them as valid. They leave such injunctions and requests as they think fit ; I obey as one who follows command. They share, they give, they leave what they possess, so long as they do it within the family.† To the slave, indeed, the family is a sort of commonwealth, so to speak, or country. Though I seek to be satisfied with these consolations, still I am overcome ; I am overpowered by the same human feeling which has led me to grant this indulgence, yet I would not wish to become harder. I know, indeed, that others speak of misfortunes of this kind as being nothing

* Epist. viii. 16.

† The "family," in Roman parlance, included the whole household, bond or free.

more than a loss of property, and think themselves, on the strength of it, great and wise men. Great and wise they may be—I cannot tell; but *men* they are not. To be touched by grief—to feel it, but fight against it; to make use of consolations, not to be above the need of them—this is what becomes a man.”

Pliny's FRIENDS were a numerous company, and it must suffice to notice a few of the most prominent. Of the men of letters we have already spoken. Among the rest, VERGINIUS RUFUS, who had acted as joint guardian with his uncle, stands foremost.

His name occurs several times in the History of Tacitus. His life was long and eventful. During the last year of Nero's reign he commanded the Roman army in Lower Germany, and in the confusion which followed on the revolt of Vindex, the soldiers wished to make him emperor. He refused, on the ground that it was for the senate and not for the army to name Nero's successor. Soon after, on Otho's death, the same offer was pressed on him by the soldiers, and a second time declined. This brought him into peril; the capricious soldiery, in their disappointment, accused him of a conspiracy against Vitellius, and insisted on his being put to death. The danger was happily escaped, and this great man lived to A.D. 97, the second year of Nerva's reign, and died as consul for the third time at the age of eighty-three. We have in the following letter* an account of the circumstances of his death and of his funeral:—

* Epist. ii. 1.

PLINY TO VOCONIUS ROMANUS.

“Rome has not for many years beheld a grander and more memorable sight than the public funeral of Verginius Rufus, a most illustrious man, and as fortunate as he was illustrious. He lived thirty years after he had reached the zenith of his fame. He read poems about himself, and histories of his achievements ; he, in fact, lived to see his fame with an after-generation. He was three times consul, thus rising to be the highest of subjects, after having refused to be an emperor. The Cæsars, who suspected and hated his virtues, he outlived, and has left behind him this best of emperors, this friend of all mankind. One would think Providence had spared him that he might receive the honour of a public funeral. He died in his eighty-fourth year, in the most perfect calm, revered by all. He had enjoyed strong health, with the exception of a trembling in his hands, which, however, gave him no pain. His last illness, indeed, was severe and tedious, but its circumstances added to his reputation. He was one day practising his voice with the view of delivering a speech of thanks to the Emperor for having promoted him to the consulship, and had taken in his hand a large volume, which was rather too heavy for an old man to hold as he stood up. It slipped from his grasp, and in hastily trying to recover it, his foot slipped on the smooth pavement ; he fell and broke his thigh-bone, which, being badly set (his age being against him), did not properly unite. His funeral obsequies have done honour to the Emperor, to the age, and to the bar.

Cornelius Tacitus, as consul, pronounced over him the funeral oration. His good fortune was crowned by having so eloquent a speaker to celebrate his praises. He died, indeed, full of years and of glory, famous even from honours which he had refused. Still our world must always sadly miss him, as an example of a past age; and for myself, I must peculiarly feel his loss, for I not only admired him as a patriot, but loved him as a friend. We came from the same part, and from neighbouring towns, and our estates joined each other. Besides all this, he was left my guardian, and treated me with a parent's affection. Whenever I was a candidate for office he supported me with his interest, and though he had long since given up all such services to friends, he would leave his retirement and give me his vote in person. On the day on which the priests nominate such as they think most worthy of the sacred office, he always proposed me. Even in his last illness, when he thought he might possibly be appointed by the senate one of the five commissioners for reducing the public expenses, he fixed upon me, young as I was, to make his excuses, in preference to many other friends of superior age and rank. He even said to me, 'Had I a son of my own I would intrust you with this matter.'

"And so I must lament his death, as though it were premature, and pour out my grief into your bosom, if indeed it is right to lament over him, or to use the word death of an event which to such a man terminates his mortality rather than ends his life. He lives, and will live for ever, and his name will be more

widely celebrated in the recollection of posterity now that he is taken from our sight. I had much else to write to you, but my mind is wholly absorbed in these thoughts. Verginius is ever present to my imagination, and even to my eyes. I am ever fondly imagining that I hear him, converse with him, embrace him. We have perhaps, and still shall have, citizens equal to him in virtue; none, I feel sure, in renown.—Farewell.”

Next to Verginius Rufus comes another soldier, VESTRICIUS SPURINNA. Spurinna had made his reputation in the wars of a former generation, when he distinguished himself by his brilliant defence of Placentia, which he held in the interest of Otho against the Vitellianist general Cæcina. It was nearly thirty years after this that Trajan, a prince not likely to choose for such service a commander who had lost anything of his vigour, put him in command of an army that was intended to operate against the Bructeri, a German tribe. The object of the campaign, which was to restore a native prince, was effected without recourse to actual hostilities. A statue, habited in the robe of triumph, was voted to Spurinna by the senate, and a similar honour was paid to his son, whom he had lost while absent from Rome. Of this son Pliny wrote a memoir, which we find him sending, with a graceful letter of condolence, to the father and mother. There is another letter addressed by Pliny to Spurinna, in which he tells him how Calpurnius Piso, grandson probably of the luckless man whom Galba adopted three days before

his death, had acquitted himself in writing some poem. "I write the more speedily," he says, "because I know how well disposed you are to all honourable pursuits, and how it delights you to find young men of noble race doing something worthy of their ancestors." The aged general was indeed an accomplished and cultivated man; nor would it be easy to find in literature a more pleasant picture than Pliny, who had just returned from a visit to his old friend, gives of his life in retirement.*

[We take the translation of Dean Merivale, in his 'History of the Romans under the Empire,' vol. vii. p. 326, 327.]

"I know not that I ever passed a pleasanter time than lately with Spurinna. There is indeed no man I should so much wish to resemble in my own old age, if I am permitted to grow old. Nothing can be finer than such a mode of life. For my part I like a well-ordered course of life, particularly in old men, just as I admire the regular order of the stars. Some amount of irregularity, and even of confusion, is not unbecoming in youth; but everything should be regular and methodical with old men, who are too late for labour, and in whom ambition would be indecent. This regularity Spurinna strictly observes, and his occupations, trifling as they are (trifling, that is, were they not performed day by day continually), he repeats as it were in a circle. At dawn he keeps his bed, at seven he asks for his slippers; he then walks just three miles, exercising his mind at the same time with his limbs.

* Epist. iii. 1.

If friends are by, he discourses seriously with them—if not, he hears a book read ; and so he sometimes does even when friends are present, if it be not disagreeable to them. He then seats himself, and more reading follows, or more conversation, which he likes better. By-and-by he mounts his carriage, taking with him his wife, a most admirable woman, or some friends—as myself, for instance, the other day. What a noble, what a charming *tête-à-tête* !—how much talk of ancient things ! what deeds, what men you hear of ! what noble precepts you imbibe, though indeed he refrains from all appearance of teaching ! Returning from a seven-mile drive, he walks again one mile ; then sits down or reclines with a pen in his hand, for he composes lyrical pieces with elegance both in Greek and Latin. Very soft, sweet, and merry they are, and their charm is enhanced by the decorum of the author's own habits. When the hour of the bath is announced—that is, at two in summer, at three in winter—he strips and takes a turn in the sun, if there is no wind. Then he uses strong exercise for a considerable space at tennis, for this is the discipline with which he struggles against old age. After the bath he takes his place at table, but puts off eating for a time, listening in the meanwhile to a little light and pleasant reading. All this time his friends are free to do as he does, or anything else they please. Dinner is then served, elegant and moderate, on plain but ancient silver. He uses Corinthian bronzes, too, and admires without being foolishly addicted to them. Players are often introduced between the courses, that

the pleasures of the mind may give a relish to those of the palate. He trenches a little on the night even in summer ; but no one finds the time tire, such are his kindness and urbanity throughout. Hence now, at the age of seventy-seven, he both hears and sees perfectly ; hence his frame is active and vigorous ; he has nothing but old age to remind him to take care of himself. Such is the mode of life to which I look forward for myself, and on which I will enter with delight as soon as advancing years allow me to effect a retreat. Meanwhile I am harassed by a thousand troubles, in which *Spurinna* is my consolation, as he has ever been my example. For he, too, as long as it became him, discharged duties, bore offices, governed provinces ; and great was the labour by which he earned his relaxation."

Another among the older friends of Pliny was *CORELLIUS RUFUS*. One of the earliest of the letters describes his death ; others speak in affectionate terms of the intimate friendship which, in spite of the disparity of age, had always existed between the two, and of the great services which the elder had rendered to the younger friend. "Our age," says Pliny, writing to a friend who had asked him to plead the cause of *Corellius's* daughter, "has seen no nobler man, none of purer life, none of keener intellect. He was one whom, when my admiration for him grew into affection, I admired the more, the more thoroughly I knew him—scarcely, you know, what usually happens." Throughout his public life, in seeking office and in discharging its duties, *Corellius* had always been at his side. "The conversation," he writes, "once happened to

turn in Nerva's presence on young men of worth. Many were speaking in high praise of me ; for a while he kept the silence which helped to give such weight to his words. At last, with that serious air which you know, he said, 'I must be moderate in praising Secundus, for he never acts but by my advice.'" The circumstances of his death were peculiarly painful. We quote the letter* in which Pliny describes them, and again avail ourselves of Dean Merivale's translation of the passage :—

"I have just suffered a great loss. My friend Corellius Rufus is dead, and by his own act, which imbitters my sorrow. No death is so much to be lamented as one that comes not in the course of fate or nature. Corellius indeed was led to this resolve by the force of reason, which holds with philosophers the place of necessity, although he had many motives for living—a good conscience, a high reputation and influence, not to mention a daughter, a wife, a grandson, sisters, and true friends besides. But he was tortured by so protracted a malady that his reasons for death outweighed all these advantages. In his thirty-third year, as I have heard him declare, he was attacked by gout in his feet.† The disease was hereditary with him. In the vigour of life he had checked it by sobriety and restraint ; when it grew worse with increasing years, he had borne it with fortitude and patience. I visited him one day, in

* Epist. i. 12.

† We have here taken the liberty of altering Dean Merivale's rendering.

Domitian's time, and found him in the greatest suffering, for the disease had spread from the feet all through his limbs. His slaves quitted the room, for such was their habit whenever an intimate friend came to see him ; and such was also his wife's practice, though she could have kept any secret. After casting his eyes around, he said, ' Why do you suppose it is I continue so long to endure these torments ? I would survive the ruffian (meaning Domitian) just one day.' Had his body been as strong as his mind, this wish he would have effected with his own hand. God granted it, however ; and when he felt that he should die a free man, he burst through all the lesser ties which bound him to life. The malady which he had tried so long to relieve by temperance still increased. At last his firmness gave way. Two, three, four days passed, and he had refused all food. His wife, Hispulla, sent our friend Geminus to me, with the melancholy news that her husband had resolved to die, and would not be dissuaded by her prayers or her daughter's ; I alone could prevail upon him. I flew to him. I had almost reached the spot, when Atticus met me from Hispulla to say that even I could not now prevail, so fixed had become his determination. To his physician, indeed, on food being offered him, he had said, ' I have decided ; ' an expression which makes me the more regret him, as I the more admire him. I think to myself, What a friend, what a man I have lost ! He had completed, indeed, his sixty-seventh year, an advanced age even for the strongest. Yes, I know it. He has escaped from his long-

protracted illness. I know it. He has died, leaving his dearest friends behind him, and the state, which was still dearer to him, in prosperity. This, too, I know. Nevertheless I lament his death, no less than if he were young and vigorous. I lament it—do not think me weak in saying so—on my own account. For I have lost—yes, I have lost a witness of my own life, a guide, a master. In short, I will say to you, as I said to my friend Calvisius, I fear I shall myself live more carelessly for the future.”

Another of his friends was JUNIUS MAURICUS, the brother of Arulenus Rusticus, who, as Tacitus tells us at the beginning of his *Life of Agricola*, had been put to death under Domitian for writing a panegyric on Pætus Thrasea. “We,” says the historian, speaking of his brother senators in one of the closing chapters, in which he briefly and powerfully sketches the last three terrible years of Domitian’s reign,—“we parted the two brothers,” the one being murdered, the other driven into exile. The banishment of Mauricus is alluded to in a letter already given about the informer Regulus.* He returned from exile in the year of Nerva’s accession; and though only three of Pliny’s extant letters are addressed to him, he was, it is clear, one of his intimate and valued friends. From one of these letters it appears that he had asked Pliny to look out for a husband for his brother’s daughter; another is a reply to the request that he would choose a tutor for his brother’s children. In these letters Pliny implies that he himself owed much to the brother, who was

one of the many victims of the reign of terror, and that he was prepared to undertake the somewhat invidious task of making a selection. Pliny says he never knew a firmer or a more outspoken man than Mauricus. The praise would seem to have been well deserved. Tacitus tells us that he put a singularly bold question to Domitian on the occasion of his father's accession to the throne. It was Domitian's first appearance in the senate, and Mauricus then and there publicly asked him to submit to the House the papers of the late emperors, so that they might see for themselves who had laid informations, and who were the subjects of those informations. The Emperor, Domitian replied, must be consulted in so important a matter; and the motion was thus evaded. We have already had occasion to allude to an instance of the truthfulness and candour of Mauricus when he was once dining with the Emperor Nerva. Pliny mentions another. There was a celebration of games, with the usual gymnastic contests, at Vienna, in Gaul, which one of Pliny's friends, who held an important office in the town, contrived to get abolished. It was said that he had done this without the authority of the townspeople; and when brought to trial, as it would appear, before the senate, he pleaded his cause himself, and carried with him the sympathies of the audience. When the verdict had to be pronounced, and it came to the turn of Mauricus to pronounce judgment, he gave it as his opinion that the games in question ought not to be repeated at Vienna; and he added the audacious and unpopular sentiment that he wished they could be abolished at Rome.

Several of Pliny's letters are addressed to VOCONIUS ROMANUS. We know nothing of him but what Pliny tells us. He was evidently one of his best and dearest friends. His father was a Roman knight, and his mother came from one of the provinces of Spain. Pliny and he had been fellow-students ; they had, no doubt, heard the same lectures at Rome, and had acquired similar tastes. Voconius was preparing himself for the bar, and became, according to Pliny, an admirable pleader. He is spoken of in the highest terms in a letter in which Pliny recommends him to the notice of Priscus, who was, it appears, in the command of a large army, and would have plenty of patronage at his disposal. Pliny says of him, "My friend is a charming talker, and has, besides, a particularly sweet expression of countenance. He has, too, ability of the highest order ; he has a piercing and refined intellect, ready for its work at a moment's notice ; he is a learned lawyer ; he writes such admirable letters that you would think the Muses themselves must speak in Latin. I love him as much as it is possible for one friend to love another, and his love for me is the same." Pliny asks for his friend a great favour of the Emperor Trajan, which we may presume was granted. He begs that he may be raised to the highest rank in the state, and be made a senator.

A singularly pathetic letter—it happens, naturally enough, that we hear most of the friends whom Pliny lost—describes the character of a younger man, Junius Avitus, to whom Pliny had rendered much the same service that he had himself received from Corellius Rufus ;

and who, after having won golden opinions both in a short military career and as prætor under more than one provincial governor, had died suddenly, immediately after completing his canvass for the ædileship. But of all the letters of the kind, there is nothing more touching than the following : *—

“ I have the saddest news to tell you. Our friend Fundanus has lost his younger daughter. I never saw a girl more cheerful, more lovable, more worthy of long life—nay, of immortality. She had not yet completed her fourteenth year, and she had already the prudence of an old woman, the gravity of a matron, and still, with all maidenly modesty, the sweetness of a girl. How she would cling to her father's neck ! how affectionately and discreetly she would greet us, her father's friends ! how she loved her nurses, her attendants, her teachers,—every one according to his service ! How earnestly, how intelligently, she used to read ! How modest was she and restrained in her sports ! And with what self-restraint, what patience—nay, what courage—she bore her last illness ! She obeyed the physicians, encouraged her father and sister, and when all strength of body had left her, kept herself alive by the vigour of her mind. This vigour lasted to the very end, and was not broken by the length of her illness or by the fear of death ; so leaving, alas ! to us yet more and weightier reasons for our grief and our regret. Oh the sadness, the bitterness of that death ! Oh the cruelty of the time when we lost her, worse even than

* Epist. v. 16.

the loss itself! She had been betrothed to a noble youth; the marriage-day had been fixed, and we had been invited. How great a joy changed into how great a sorrow! I cannot express in words how it went to my heart when I heard Fundanus himself (this is one of the grievous experiences of sorrow) giving orders that what he had meant to lay out on dresses, and pearls, and jewels, should be spent on incense, unguents, and spices."

CHAPTER X.

COUNTRY LIFE—PLINY'S VILLAS.

PLINY, like all the rich men of his time, lived much in the country. He thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated the charms of rural scenery, and his descriptions of it have about them the tone of modern sentiment. As we read them, we seem to be on the threshold of our own times. There is, we feel, a distinct link between our own tastes and those of a Roman who could dwell with pleasure on the beauties of a landscape. The Roman of the upper class, no doubt, had always been fond of country life, and was in many respects not unlike an English squire ; but it would seem that the sort of sentimental, and, so to speak, artistic feeling about the country which is so familiar to us, was specially developed under the Empire, and exhibited itself in the literature of the Silver age.

In the following letter Pliny contrasts life in Rome with life in the country :—

PLINY TO MINUTIUS FUNDANUS.*

“When one considers how the time passes at Rome,

* Epist. i. 9.

one cannot but be surprised that, take any single day, and it either is or seems to be spent reasonably enough; and yet, upon casting up the whole sum, the amount will appear quite otherwise. Ask any of your friends what he has been doing to-day? he will tell you, perhaps, 'I have been paying a visit to a friend on the occasion of his son's coming of age; I have had an invitation to a wedding; I have had to witness the signature of a will; I was asked to attend the hearing of a cause; I was called in to a consultation.' All these duties seem very important while you are engaged in them; yet, when you reflect at your leisure that every day has been thus employed, you feel them to be mere trifles. Then you think to yourself how many of your days have been spent in a dull dreary routine. This is my own case when I retire to my house at Laurentum for a little quiet reading and writing, and for the bodily rest which freshens up the mind. Then I hear nothing and say nothing for which I have reason to be sorry; no one talks scandal to me, and I find fault with nobody, except myself, when I cannot compose to my satisfaction. There I am free from the anxieties of hope and fear; no rumours worry me; my books and my thoughts are my only companions. True and genuine life, sweet and honourable repose, nobler than any sort of occupation! O sea and shore, true scene for study and contemplation, with how many thoughts do you inspire me! My friend, do you too take the first opportunity of leaving the bustle of Rome, with its idle pursuits and laborious trifles, and give yourself up to

study or to repose. 'It is better,' as my friend Atilius has said, with as much wit as wisdom, 'to have nothing to do than to be doing nothing.'—Farewell."

Horace complains in very much the same way of a city life, and of the infinite boredom which so often attends it. "As soon as I came," he says, "to the gardens of Mæcenat at Rome, a hundred suitors leap out and pounce upon me, and annoy me with endless solicitations." Some of the very same particular troubles are mentioned by the poet as are alluded to by Pliny.

In the following letter we see the delight which Pliny took in beautiful scenery. It is a description of the source of the Clitumnus and the surrounding country. The Clitumnus was a little river in Umbria, and a tributary of the Tiber. It was known as the Timia or Tinia during the last nine or ten miles of its course. Virgil speaks of the singularly white cattle which were pastured on its banks. It flowed through a rich valley bounded on either side by the Apennines. It would appear that the picturesqueness of the scenery about its source attracted a number of visitors. Clitunno is its modern name; Spoleto and Foligno are in its immediate neighbourhood.

PLINY TO ROMANUS.*

"Have you ever seen the source of the Clitumnus? I suppose not, as I never heard you mention it. Let me advise you to go there at once. I have just seen it, and am sorry I put off my visit so long.

* Epist. iii. 8.

“At the foot of a little hill, covered with old and shady cypress-trees, gushes out a spring, which bursts out into a number of streamlets, all of different sizes. Having struggled, so to speak, out of its confinement, it opens out into a broad basin, so clear and transparent that you may count the pebbles and little pieces of money which are thrown into it. From this point the force and weight of the water, rather than the slope of the ground, hurries it onward. What was a mere fountain becomes a noble river, wide enough to allow vessels to pass each other, as they sail with or against the stream. The current is so strong, though the ground is level, that large barges, as they go down the river, do not require the assistance of oars ; while to go up it is as much as can possibly be done with oars and long poles. When you sail up and down for amusement, the ease of going down the stream and the labour of returning make a pleasant variety. The banks are clothed with an abundance of ash and poplar, which are so distinctly reflected in the clear water that they seem to be growing at the bottom of the river, and can be easily counted. The water is as cold as snow, and its colour the same. Near it stands an ancient and venerable temple, in which is a statue of the river-god Clitumnus, clothed in the usual robe of state. The oracles here delivered attest the presence of the deity. In the immediate neighbourhood are several little chapels, dedicated to particular gods, each of whom has his distinctive name and special worship, and is the tutelary deity of a fountain. For, besides the principal spring, which is, as it were, the parent of

all the rest, there are several smaller springs which have a distinct source, but which unite their waters with the Clitumnus, over which a bridge is thrown, separating the sacred part of the river from that which is open to general use. Above the bridge you may only go in a boat ; below it, you may swim. The people of the town of Hispellum, to whom Augustus gave this place, furnish baths and lodgings at the public expense. There are several little houses on the banks, in the specially picturesque situations, and they are quite close to the water. In short, everything in the neighbourhood will give you pleasure. You may also amuse yourself with numberless inscriptions on the pillars and walls, celebrating the praises of the stream and of its tutelary divinity. Many of these you will admire, and some will make you laugh. But no ; you are too cultivated a person to laugh on such an occasion.—Farewell.”

Lord Orrery, who published a translation of the Letters early in the last century, in some observations on this letter, says that it reminds us of St Winifred's Well in Wales. The old temple of Clitumnus may be compared with the chapel of St Winifred, and the honours paid to the Italian god bear a resemblance to the miraculous powers popularly attributed to the old British saint.

When in the country, Pliny used to indulge in the fashionable country sports, though we should think they were not quite to his taste. Possibly his physical strength was hardly equal to the exertion which

they required. There is a decided touch of affectation in the following letter to his friend Tacitus, in which he tells him how he contrived to do literary work in the hunting-field. As Lord Orrery remarks, a thoroughbred fox-hunter would at once conclude that Pliny had no real heart for field-sports.

PLINY TO TACITUS.*

“You will laugh, and laugh you may. Your old friend, whom you know so well, has captured three magnificent boars. What! Pliny? you will say. Yes, Pliny; without, however, abandoning my indolent habits and love of repose. The nets were spread, and I sat close to them, but instead of a boar-spear or javelin, I was armed with my pen and my note-book. I mused, and put down my thoughts on paper, for I had made up my mind that if I had to return with my hands empty, my note-book should be full. There is no reason why you should despise this way of studying. You cannot conceive how much bodily exercise contributes to enliven the imagination. Besides, the solitude of the woods around you, and the perfect silence which is observed in hunting, strongly inclines the mind to thought. For the future, when you go hunting, let me advise you to take with you your papers, as well as a basket of provisions and a bottle of wine. You will then find that Minerva haunts the mountains quite as much as Diana. —Farewell.”

* Epist. i. 6.

But perhaps the most interesting and important of Pliny's letters in connection with country life are those in which he describes his country houses, of which he had several. Of the two principal he gives us a very elaborate account, to which we are indebted for most of our knowledge about the character of a Roman villa. One of these was close to Ostia, about seventeen miles from Rome, facing the Tyrrhenian Sea. This Pliny calls his Laurentine, Laurentum having been the old legendary capital of Latium, and having given its name to a considerable strip of the western coast of Italy, in the neighbourhood of the mouth of the Tiber. It is not possible to identify the site of Pliny's villa, as might be expected from a circumstance which he himself tells us, that his own was only one of a great number of villas on this part of the coast. Its moderate distance from Rome made it just the place which a rich and hard-working man would select for a country seat. Pliny tells us he could transact his business in Rome, and arrive comfortably at his villa on the evening of the same day. His other principal country mansion was on a larger scale, and at a much greater distance from Rome. He always calls it his Tuscan villa. It was under the Apennine range, and the Tiber flowed through the adjacent meadows. The great Roman houses, at all events in the country, seem to have consisted of but one storey. We subjoin considerable portions of the letters in which Pliny describes his Laurentine and Tuscan villas. They are too long to be inserted in full.

PLINY TO GALLUS.*

“You wonder why I am so extremely fond of my house at Laurentum. You will wonder no longer when I make you acquainted with its attractiveness, the advantages of its situation, and the extent of shore on which it stands.”

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“It is but seventeen miles from Rome, so that I can pass my evening here without breaking in upon the business of the day. There are two roads to it; if you go by that of Laurentum you must turn off at the fourteenth milestone—if by that of Ostia, at the eleventh. Both are rather sandy, which makes them heavy for a carriage, but easy and pleasant if you go on horseback. You have a variety of landscape; sometimes your view is shut in by woods, then again it opens out into broad meadows, where numberless flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, which the inclemency of winter has driven from the mountains, grow fat and sleek during the warmth of spring in the rich pasturage.

“My house is for use, not for show. You first enter a courtyard, plain and simple without being mean, and then pass into a colonnade in the shape of the letter D, the space enclosed by which looks bright and cheerful. Here one has a capital place of retreat in bad weather, for there are windows all round it, and it is sheltered by a projection on the roof. Opposite the middle of the colonnade is a very pleasant inner court, which leads into a handsome dining-room

* Epist. ii. 17.

running out to the sea-shore. When the wind is in the south-west, its walls are gently washed by the waves which break at its foot. The room has folding-doors, or windows as large as doors, and from these you might imagine you see three different seas. From another point you look through the colonnade into the court, and see the mountains in the distance. To the left of the dining-room, a little further from the sea, is a spacious sitting-room, within that a smaller room, one side of which gets the morning and the other the afternoon sun. This I make my winter snugery. Then comes a room, the windows of which are so arranged that they secure the sun for us during the whole day. In its walls is a bookcase for such works as can never be read too often."

Then follows a description of the bed-rooms, dressing-rooms, bath-rooms, &c., which were all on an elaborate scale. There were both hot and cold baths, and a warming-apparatus. There was also a tennis-court, warmed by the afternoon sun, at the end of which was a sort of tower. This, unlike the rest of the house, appears to have been built in storeys, and the highest storey was for the express purpose of enjoying an extensive prospect.

"The garden is chiefly planted with fig and mulberry trees, to which this soil is peculiarly favourable. Here is a dining-room, which, though it is at a distance from the sea, commands a prospect no less pleasant. Behind this room are two apartments, the

windows of which look out on the entrance to the house, and to a well-stocked kitchen-garden. You then enter a sort of cloister, which you might suppose built for public use. It has a range of windows on each side ; in fair weather we open all of them ; if it blows, we shut those on the exposed side, and are perfectly sheltered. In front of this colonnade is a terrace, fragrant with the scent of violets, and warmed by the reflection of the sun from the portico. We find this a very pleasant place in winter, and still more so in summer, for then it throws a shade on the terrace during the forenoon, while in the afternoon we can walk under its shade in the place of exercise, or in the adjoining part of the garden. The portico is coolest when the sun's rays strike perpendicularly on its roof. By setting open the windows, the soft western breezes have a free draught, and so the air is never close and oppressive."

One of the rooms was so contrived, that Pliny says, when he was in it, he seemed to be at a distance from his own house ; and on the occasion of the feast of the Saturnalia, which gave his domestics and servants full licence to make as much noise as they liked, he found this a particularly convenient retreat.

The letter concludes with a brief description of the neighbourhood.

"Amid the conveniences and attractions of the place, there is one drawback ; we want running water. However, we have wells, or rather springs, at our command. Such is the extraordinary nature of the ground, that in whatever part you dig, as soon as you have

turned up the surface of the soil, you meet with a spring of perfectly pure water, altogether free from any salt taste. The neighbouring woods supply us with fuel in abundance, and all kinds of provisions may be had from Ostia. A man with few and simple wants might get all he required from the next village. In that little place there are three public baths, a very great convenience, in case my friends come in unexpectedly, and my bath is not ready heated and prepared. The whole coast is prettily studded with detached villas or rows of villas, which, whether you view them from the sea or the shore, look like a collection of towns. The strand is sometimes, after a long calm, perfectly smooth, though in general, by the storms driving the waves upon it, it is rough and uneven. I cannot say that we have any very fine fish, but we get excellent soles and prawns. As to other kinds of provisions, my house is better off than those which are inland, especially as to milk, for the cattle come here in great numbers to seek water and shade."

Pliny had no estate or park of any extent round his Laurentine house. In this respect his Tuscan villa contrasts advantageously with it. It was here that he liked to spend the summer months, as he did a great part of the winter at Laurentum.

His description of his Tuscan seat is equally minute as the preceding. We give portions of it.

PLINY TO DOMITIUS APOLLINARIS.*

"I sincerely thank you for your kind concern in

* Epist. v. 6.

trying to dissuade me from passing the summer on my Tuscan property, under the impression that it is an unhealthy part. It is quite true that the air of the coast is unwholesome, but my house is at a distance from the sea, under one of the Apennines which are singularly healthy. But, to relieve you from all anxiety on my account, I will describe to you the climate and character of the country, and the lovely situation of my house. I am sure you will read the description with as much pleasure as I shall give it.

“The air in winter is sharp and frosty, so that myrtles and olives, and trees which delight in warmth, will not grow there. The laurel thrives, and is remarkably beautiful, though now and then it is killed by the cold—not, however, oftener than at Rome. The summers are very temperate, and there is always a refreshing breeze, seldom high winds. To this I attribute the number of old men. If you were to see the grandfathers and great-grandfathers, and hear their stories about their ancestors, you would fancy yourself born in some former age.

“The character of the country is very beautiful. Picture to yourself an immense amphitheatre, such as only nature could create. Before you lies a broad plain, bounded by a range of mountains whose summits are covered with tall and ancient woods, which are stocked with all kinds of game for hunting. The lower slopes of the mountains are planted with underwood, among which are a number of little risings with a rich soil, on which hardly a stone is to be found. In fruitfulness they are quite equal to a

valley, and produce as good crops, though not so early in the year. Below these, on the mountain-side, is a continuous stretch of vineyards, terminated by a belt of shrubs. Then you have meadows and the open plain. The arable land is so stiff that it is necessary to go over it nine times with the biggest oxen and the strongest ploughs. The meadows are bright with flowers, and produce trefoil and other kinds of herbage as fine and tender as if it were but just sprung up. All the soil is refreshed with never-failing streams, but though there is plenty of water, there are no marshes ; for as the ground is on a slope, all the water which is not absorbed runs off into the Tiber.

“ This river winds through the midst of the meadows. It is navigable only in winter and in spring, and then conveys the produce of the neighbourhood to Rome. In summer it shrinks to nothing, and leaves the name of a great river to an almost empty channel. In autumn it again claims its title.

“ You would be charmed by taking a view of the country from one of the neighbouring mountains. You would fancy that you were looking on the imaginary landscape of a first-rate artist ; such a harmonious variety of beautiful objects meets the eye wherever it turns.

“ My house commands as good a view as if it stood on the brow of the hill. You approach it by so gradual a rise that you find yourself on high ground without perceiving that you have been making an ascent. Behind, but at a considerable distance, is the Apennine range, from which, on the calmest days, we get

cool breezes. There is nothing sharp or cutting about them, as the distance is sufficient to break their violence. The greater part of the house has a southern aspect, and enjoys the afternoon sun in summer, and gets it rather earlier in winter. It is fronted by a broad and proportionately long colonnade, which has a porch of antique fashion, and in front of this colonnade is a terrace edged with box and shrubs cut into different shapes. From the terrace you descend by an easy slope to a lawn, and on each side of the descent are figures of animals in box facing each other. You then come to a shrubbery formed of the soft, I had almost said, the liquid acanthus. Round this runs a walk, shut in by evergreens shaped into every variety of form. Beyond this is a riding-ring, like a circus, which goes round the box-hedge and the dwarf-trees which are cut close."

The remainder of the letter is occupied with a very detailed description of the plan and arrangement of the house. Pliny, as he says, had made up his mind to take his friend into every nook and corner of it. We find that everything was on a splendid and luxurious scale. There are summer and winter rooms, bath and dining rooms, a tennis-court, a carriage-drive, and a hippodrome or place for horse exercise, alcoves of marble in the gardens, shaded with vines, and fountains and little rills in all directions. The garden seems to have been laid out in a somewhat stiff and formal manner; there was, however, it seems, an attempt to introduce into it an imitation of the wild

beauty of nature. It appears that the practice of cutting trees into regular shapes came into fashion among the Romans in the time of Augustus. In this garden of Pliny's Tuscan villa we find it to be a very prominent feature. We find, too, the plane-tree frequently mentioned, as well as the cypress and the box. Pliny says he had a special affection for this villa and its surroundings, as they were designed by himself. It was natural that he should take great pleasure in describing it at length. "You will hardly," he says to his friend, "think it a trouble to read the description of a place which I am persuaded would charm you were you to see it." Towards the close of this long letter he hints that he had villas at Tusculum, Tibur, Præneste,—all names familiar to persons acquainted with Latin literature. Of these villas he tells us nothing, except that he did not like them so much as his Tuscan seat. He had also, as we have mentioned, some villas on the margin of the Lake of Como. Two of these, which were his especial favourites, he playfully called "Tragedy" and "Comedy." In the following letter the names are explained.

PLINY TO ROMANUS.*

"I am glad to find by your letter that you have begun to build. I may now shelter myself under your example. I am myself building, and as I have you on my side, I have reason too. We are also alike in another respect: you are building by the sea, I am

* Epist. ix. 7.

building by Lake Larius. I have several villas on the border of this lake, but there are two in which I take most delight, and which chiefly occupy my attention. They are situated like the houses at Baïæ; one of them stands on a rock, and commands a view of the lake; the other is close to the water. I call one 'Tragedy,' because it is supported, as it were, by the high buskin; the other 'Comedy,' as resting on the humble sock. Each has its own peculiar beauties, which, from their very difference, are all the more pleasing to their owner. One has a nearer view of the lake; the other commands a wider prospect over it. The first is built along the bend of a little bay; the latter is on a cliff which runs out so as to form two bays. Here you have a straight walk, extending along the banks of the lake; there a spacious terrace, that falls towards it by a gentle descent. The former does not feel the force of the waves, the latter breaks them; from one you see people fishing below, from the other you may fish yourself, and almost throw your line from your chamber, as you lie in bed, as well as if you were in a boat. It is the beauties these villas possess which tempt me to add to them those which are wanting. But why should I give you a reason when I know that you will think it a sufficient one that I am following your example?—Farewell."

The following letter tells us how Pliny occasionally played the part of the benevolent patron in a thoroughly modern fashion. It reminds us of a church-opening, and of the luncheon which commonly succeeds it:—

PLINY TO FABATUS, HIS WIFE'S GRANDFATHER.*

“You have long been wishing to see your granddaughter and myself. We are equally anxious to see you, and are determined to delay the pleasure no longer; indeed we are actually packing up, and mean to set off as soon as the state of the roads will permit. We shall stop only once, and that for a short time. We must turn a little out of the way to go to my Tuscan property—not to look after the estate (for that might be postponed), but to perform an indispensable duty. Near my property is a town called Tifernum-on-Tiber, which put itself under my patronage when I was a mere boy, thus showing an affection for me as strong as it was undeserved. The people always celebrate my arrival with public rejoicings, express sorrow when I leave them, and are delighted whenever they hear of my preferment to office. To show my gratitude to them (for it is a shame to be outdone in friendly feeling) I built them a temple at my own expense, and as it is finished, it would be a sort of impiety to delay its consecration any longer. We shall be there on the day fixed for the ceremony, and I intend to celebrate it with a public banquet. Perhaps we may stay there the next day, but in that case we shall make all the more haste in our journey. May we have the happiness to find you and your daughter in good health, for I am sure we shall find you in good spirits if we arrive safely.—Farewell.”

* Epist. iv. 1.

CHAPTER XI.

PLINY IN HIS PROVINCE.

IN A.D. 103, the sixth year of Trajan's reign, Pliny was appointed governor of the provinces known as Bithynia and Pontus, or Pontica, as it was also called. He bore the title of Legatus and Proprætor, and he had the consular power. He had, in short, the highest rank and position with which a Roman governor could be invested. It would seem that he did not actually arrive in his province till the middle of the September of the year. He landed after a pleasant voyage at Ephesus, and thence had a rather tiresome and disagreeable journey during excessive heat to Pergamos, where he stopped a while. His health, never very strong, had been shaken by a serious illness in the preceding year. His life, he tells the Emperor in one of his letters, had been in danger, and he availed himself of a mode of treatment which we may presume was much in fashion at the time. He procured the services of a medical practitioner who cured many of his patients by the simple process of rubbing and anointing. So much good did he derive from the remedy prescribed,

that, with the gratitude which he always felt for a kindness, he asked the Emperor to grant to the physician, who was probably either a Jew or a Greek, the freedom of the city of Alexandria, and also the privileges of Roman citizenship. His province was an important one. Its administration at this particular time required tact and ability. It contained several considerable towns, to the prosperity of which, it would appear, the imperial government had greatly contributed. Some of them, as Neocæsareia, or Nicæa, where the famous ecclesiastical council was held in A.D. 314, were of comparatively recent origin. There were also the free cities of Chalcedon, Nicomedeia, Amisus, and Trapezus, and the colonies of Heracleia and Sinope. The district had the elements of wealth; parts of it, especially towards the coast, were extremely productive; and it had iron mines. Its population must have been of a very mixed character, with Greek ideas and civilisation diffused throughout it. And in Pliny's time, as we shall see, Christianity had gained a strong hold on the people, and was a fact of the highest importance.

Pliny had unquestionably many both of the moral and intellectual qualities which go to make a good and wise ruler. He had carefully cultivated a habit of sympathy, and his tendency was to be as gentle and merciful as possible. He was, as we should say, thoroughly tolerant and liberal. He was particularly fond of everything Greek; and, as we have seen, he especially delighted in the society of Greek rhetoricians and philosophers. In the following letter his love and

admiration of Greece and its culture are strikingly displayed. Like a well-known letter of Cicero to his brother Quintus, it is a letter of advice to a friend who was about to enter on the government of Achaia, and had already earned credit as the governor of Bithynia.

PLINY TO MAXIMUS.*

“My friendship for you constrains me, I will not say to give you directions (for you do not require them), but to remind you of what you already know, so that you may put it in practice, and even know it more thoroughly. Consider that you are sent to the province of Achaia, that true and genuine Greece, whence civilisation, literature, even agriculture, are believed to have taken their origin,—sent to regulate the condition of free cities, whose inhabitants are men in the best sense of the word—free men of the noblest kind, inasmuch as they have maintained the freedom which nature gives as a right, by their virtues, by their good actions, and by the securities of alliance and solemn obligation. Revere the gods who founded their state; revere the glory of their ancient days, even that old age itself, which, as in men it claims respect, is in cities altogether sacred. Honour their old traditions, their great deeds, even their legends. Grant to every one his full dignity, freedom—yes, and the indulgence of his vanity. Keep ever before you the fact that it was this land which gave us our laws—gave them to us, not as a conquered people, but at our own

* Epist. viii. 24.

request. It is Athens, remember, to which you go,—it is Lacedæmon you will have to govern; and to take from such states the shadow and the surviving name of liberty would be a cruel and barbarous act. You see that physicians treat the free with more tenderness than slaves, though their disorder may be the same. Remember what each of these states has been, but so remember as not to despise them for being no longer what they were. Show no pride or arrogance; and yet do not be afraid that you will fall into contempt. Can he who is invested with power, and has the insignia of authority, be despised, unless he first shows that he despises himself by being mean and avaricious? Power is ill proved by insult; ill can terror command respect; far more efficacious is love in procuring submission than fear. Terror vanishes with your absence, while love remains; the former turns to hatred, the latter to reverence. You must therefore again and again call to mind the meaning of your title, and make yourself fully understand what a great work is the government of free cities. For what can be better for society than such government; what can be more precious than freedom? Again, what could be more shameful than to turn the first into anarchy, the last into slavery?"

We may be pretty sure that Pliny tried to govern his province on the principles here laid down. From his correspondence with Trajan, he would seem to have combined kindness with energy. A Roman governor had very great powers, and a very wide latitude given

him. He commanded the army, and he had to hear and decide causes. He had to impose the taxes, and take care that they were collected. Much, one would suppose, must have been left to the governor's discretion. Pliny's letters to Trajan, however, do not bear out this impression. He would appear to have thought that he was not justified in dealing with the most ordinary matters without appealing to the Emperor. Very possibly this may have been the general tone of a Roman governor at this time. Pliny, however, carried it so far that we think he must have been wanting in that self-reliance without which a man cannot be even a subordinate of the highest order. Trajan, no doubt, liked and esteemed Pliny; yet on one occasion he gives him a gentle reproof. The people of Nicæa had undertaken to build a theatre; and when £80,000 had been spent, it was found that the walls were cracked from top to bottom, either from the foundation being laid on marshy ground, or from the bad quality of the stones. Pliny asks the Emperor whether in his opinion the work should be finished, or entirely abandoned. This seems to imply a very strict system of imperialism, or such a question would have been utterly absurd. The Emperor hints very plainly that Pliny must decide for himself. "You are on the spot," he says in his answer, "and are the best person to consider and determine what had better be done in the matter." The town of Nicæa, it would appear, did not manage its affairs very well. Pliny tells us in the same letter that it was rebuilding, on an enlarged plan, a gymnasium which

had been burnt down before his arrival in the province. They had already incurred a considerable, and, as it turned out, a useless expense. The structure was not only very irregular and ill arranged, but a second architect who had been called in, and who was a rival of the original architect, declared that the walls, though they were twenty-two feet thick, were not strong enough to support the fabric, not having been properly cemented. It seems strange that Pliny should write to the Emperor about such details. The explanation is to be sought in the fact, that a grant from the imperial treasury was occasionally made to supplement the deficiencies of local resources. Trajan in his reply shows the contempt of a soldier for the trifling amusements of the Greeks. "These paltry Greeks, I know, are extravagantly fond of gymnastic diversions; and therefore, perhaps, the citizens of Nicæa have planned a more magnificent building for this purpose than is necessary. However, they must be contented with such as will be sufficient to answer the use for which it is intended."

Only a very few of Pliny's letters to Trajan refer to matters of great interest or importance. In one he recommends a friend with a testimonial to the Emperor; in another he explains some slight deviation from ordinary routine; in by far the larger number he writes about purely local matters, which, with our ideas, it would seem almost an impertinence to refer to a ruler who was many hundred miles distant. One of them is interesting as an illustration of the extreme jealousy of Roman imperialism, and its dread of anything like

secret societies. It reminds us of our trades-unions and working men's associations. A destructive fire had broken out in the city of Nicomedeia, and the people, instead of trying to extinguish it, looked on as idle and indifferent spectators. There were no engines or buckets at hand—no means, in short, of putting a stop to the fire. It occurred to Pliny that it would be advisable to form an association of firemen, limited however to 150 members. This very moderate proposal does not commend itself to the Emperor. In his reply he tells Pliny that it is to be remembered that such societies have greatly disturbed the peace of the province. "Whatever name we give them," he says, "and for whatever purpose they may be established, they are sure to become factious combinations, however short their meetings may be."

From another of Pliny's letters it appears that the people of this same town were as careless in their management of public money as those of Nicæa. They had spent a great sum on an aqueduct, and left it so unfinished that it actually fell to pieces. The same fate attended a second attempt, so that the town after a vast expenditure was still without water. Pliny tells the Emperor that he has himself visited a spring from which the water can be brought, and that the work can be constructed with the old materials, but that it is really of the first importance that they should have an architect from Rome to superintend the affair, and guarantee them against a recurrence of failure. "The usefulness and greatness of the work," he adds, "is fully worthy of your reign." Trajan's reply is

short and to the point. He tells Pliny that he ought to find out whose fault it is that so much money has been thrown away; and he plainly hints that the jobbery of the townspeople among themselves has been the cause of the disaster.

Trajan's reign, as we know, was a great time for the construction of aqueducts, and several of Pliny's letters concern this subject. The inhabitants of the colony of Sinope were badly off for water, and it could only be conveyed into the town from a distance of sixteen miles. Pliny consults the Emperor, and tells him that he believes the money can be raised on the spot, if he, the Emperor, is willing to concede such an indulgence to the thirsty townspeople. Trajan's reply is favourable; the work, he says, will conduce to the health and beauty of the place. Public baths, too, were much in request at this time, and no town was thought to be complete without them. This was a matter which Pliny referred to the Emperor. The people of Prusa wanted new baths, and Pliny found that there was a very eligible site in a spot now occupied by the ruins of what had been a noble mansion. Part of it, it seemed, had been designed by the owner to be a temple in honour of the Emperor Claudius; the remainder was to be leased out for the benefit of the town. Pliny suggests that the entire site had better be given or sold to the town, and public baths constructed on it. Trajan's answer shows that he was not without religious scruples. "You have not," he says, "distinctly told me whether a temple to Claudius was actually erected on the spot; if so, though it has fallen down, the soil

on which it stood is still sacred." We have an amusing instance of a sanitary matter being brought by Pliny under the Emperor's notice. A town, by name Amastria, had, among many other beauties, a remarkably fine street of great length, by the side of which there ran what was dignified with the name of a river, but what was in reality a nasty sewer, as foul to the sight as it was to the smell. Pliny thought it necessary to tell Trajan that it ought to be covered up, and that this should be done if the Emperor would sanction the necessary expenditure. If all Roman governors referred such matters to the Emperor, centralisation must have been carried to a preposterous extent.

Trajan's objection to so simple a thing as the formation of a kind of fire brigade, gives us a clue to the general attitude of imperialism towards the most important phenomenon of the age. Christianity, indeed, had now become a fact which could not escape the notice of an observant ruler, and towards which no one penetrated with the true spirit of Roman policy could preserve a friendly or even an indifferent attitude. For Roman tolerance, though in one sense very wide, was yet restricted by well-defined limits. To every conquered country it accorded the right of worshipping, without molestation, its own gods. In legal language, each national faith became "a lawful religion" (*religio licita*). But this religion might, strictly speaking, be practised only within its natural limits. To this rule there were, of course, large exceptions. It would have been a great hardship on a Roman subject, pursuing some lawful occupation elsewhere than in his native

country, if he had been forbidden to worship after his own manner. In Rome especially, where strangers from all the world were assembled, the rule was relaxed, even to a degree which sometimes—as when, for instance, the worship of the Egyptian Isis was forbidden—called forth the interference of the state. Of all recognised religions, none was more commonly to be seen flourishing in foreign countries than that of the Jews. And it was with this religion of the Jews that Christianity was, for the early years of its existence, confounded by all but the best-informed observer. It shared the reverses of what may be called the mother faith, as we may see in the banishment of Aquila and Priscilla; but it also shared its immunities. It was not long, however, before the distinction between the two began to be noticed. Christianity was the more active, and therefore the more offensive, of the kindred faiths. This unpopularity must have become sufficiently marked when Nero selected the Christians to bear the weight of the popular rage, which had been roused by the destruction of Rome. Titus, if we may trust the speech which Sulpicius Severus—borrowing probably from Tacitus—puts into his mouth, recognised the difference, though he thought the two religions to be so intimately connected that the overthrow of the headquarters of the one would lead to the ruin of the other.* The language quoted below displays the

* The occasion of the speech was the council held, after the capture of Jerusalem, to determine the fate of the Temple. It runs thus:—"On the other hand, some, Titus himself among them, were of opinion that the Temple, more than anything

growth of that feeling of suspicion and hostility which was about to bear fruit in more than two centuries of persecution. Titus does not seem in his short reign to have taken any steps for giving effect to his feelings about the new faith. Possibly he believed that what he had done in the destruction of Jerusalem would suffice. Domitian's capricious tyranny was not likely to be peculiarly formidable to the Christians, though it seems probable the informers—of whom we have heard as being peculiarly active in his reign—took occasion to bring against some of them the accusation of atheism. Trajan was a vigorous ruler, full of the traditions of Roman policy ; and it was inevitable that he should come into collision with the great Society which had now extended into all the provinces of the empire. To him it seemed a secret society of the most dangerous character. It had no home of its own to which it could point as its national seat. It claimed to embrace all nations in a strange brotherhood, which seemed to be, as indeed it really was, the rival of that empire which also claimed to be coextensive with the world. With Pliny's famous letter on the subject, and Trajan's reply, we conclude this chapter.

else, must be destroyed, that so the Jewish and the Christian superstition might be thoroughly eradicated. These superstitions, though mutually opposed, had had their origin in the same people. The Christians had risen up from among the Jews ; if the root was removed, the stem would soon perish." The contradiction between this and the account given by Josephus, who attributes the conflagration of the Temple to his own countrymen, is remarkable.

PLINY TO THE EMPEROR.*

“It is my invariable rule to refer to you in all matters about which I feel doubtful. Who can better remove my doubts or inform my ignorance? I have never been present at any trials of Christians, so that I do not know what is the nature of the charge against them, or what is the usual punishment. Whether any difference or distinction is made between the young and persons of mature years—whether repentance of their fault entitles them to pardon—whether the very profession of Christianity, unaccompanied by any criminal act, or whether only the crime itself involved in the profession, is a subject of punishment; on all these points I am in great doubt. Meanwhile, as to those persons who have been charged before me with being Christians, I have observed the following method. I asked them whether they were Christians; if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice, and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished. I could not doubt that whatever might be the nature of their opinions, such inflexible obstinacy deserved punishment. Some were brought before me, possessed with the same infatuation, who were Roman citizens; these I took care should be sent to Rome. As often happens, the accusation spread, from being followed, and various phases of it came under my notice. An anonymous information was laid before me, containing a great number of names. Some said they neither were and

* Epist. x. 97, 98.

never had been Christians ; they repeated after me an invocation of the gods, and offered wine and incense before your statue (which I had ordered to be brought for that purpose, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ ; whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into any of these acts. These I thought ought to be discharged. Some among them, who were accused by a witness in person, at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it ; the rest owned that they had once been Christians, but had now (some above three years, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) renounced the profession. They all worshipped your statue and those of the gods, and uttered imprecations against the name of Christ. They declared that their offence or crime was summed up in this, that they met on a stated day before daybreak, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for any wicked purpose, but never to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, never to break their word, or to deny a trust when called on to deliver it up : after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, and to eat together a harmless meal. From this custom, however, they desisted after the proclamation of my edict, by which, according to your command, I forbade the meeting of any assemblies. In consequence of their declaration, I judged it necessary to try to get at the real truth by putting to the torture two female slaves, who were said to officiate in their religious rites ; but all I could

discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition. And so I adjourned all further proceedings in order to consult you. It seems to me a matter deserving your consideration, more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks, ages, and of both sexes. The contagion of the superstition is not confined to the cities, it has spread into the villages and the country. Still I think it may be checked. At any rate, the temples which were almost abandoned again begin to be frequented, and the sacred rites, so long neglected, are revived, and there is also a general demand for victims for sacrifice, which till lately found very few purchasers. From all this it is easy to conjecture what numbers might be reclaimed, if a general pardon were granted to those who repent of their error."

The following is the Emperor's reply :—

TRAJAN TO PLINY.

"You have adopted the right course in investigating the charges made against the Christians who were brought before you. It is not possible to lay down any general rule for all such cases. Do not go out of your way to look for them. If they are brought before you, and the offence is proved, you must punish them, but with this restriction, that when the person denies that he is a Christian, and shall make it evident that he is not by invoking the gods, he is to be pardoned,

notwithstanding any former suspicion against him. Anonymous informations ought not to be received in any sort of prosecution. It is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and is quite foreign to the spirit of our age."

Pliny remained in his province two years, and then returned to Rome.

CHAPTER XII.

PLINY'S OPINIONS AND HABITS.

PLINY'S time, as we have seen, was divided between Rome and the country. At Rome he was a busy man. He was an advocate in considerable practice ; he was a member of the senate, and took a lively interest in all its proceedings ; and he was evidently much in request in fashionable and literary society. Often would he have to hurry away from the court in which he had been pleading, to hear and criticise the composition of one of his many friends. He was, too, we should suppose, a man of genial and social temper, and was never unwilling to accept an invitation to dinner, provided he thought the conversation and the general character of the entertainment was likely to have about it a refined and elegant tone. The banquets of the vulgar rich, though occasionally he may have found it advisable to attend them, he despised and detested.

Country life, with its quiet and repose, he really enjoyed—perhaps all the more from the weakness of his constitution, which no doubt sometimes succumbed to the fatigues of city life. He had an eye for the

beautiful scenery of Italy ; and it would seem, to judge from his minute descriptions, that he felt a genuine pride and pleasure in the arrangement of his gardens. He is continually telling us in his letters how peculiarly favourable he found the country to meditation and to literary work ; and it was in the retirement of one or other of his numerous villas that he used to revise his various compositions. If we may judge from one or two allusions, he was partial to the quiet amusement of fishing. Hunting he regarded as good for the refreshment of the mind rather than as a pleasure in itself. A gentle ride or stroll were much more to his taste than any such violent exercise. In the following letter he gives us a pleasant picture of the way in which he passed his time at his Tuscan villa :—

PLINY TO FUSCUS.*

“ You wish to know how I dispose of my time in the summer at my Tuscan villa. I wake without being called, generally about six o’clock, sometimes earlier, but seldom later. My windows remain shut, as I find the darkness and quiet have a very happy effect on the mind. Being thus withdrawn from all objects which call off the attention, I am left to my own thoughts, and instead of suffering my mind to wander with my eyes, I keep my eyes in subjection to my mind. If I have any literary work on hand, I think over it, and revise the style and expression, just as if I had my pen in my hand. Thus I get through more or less work, according as the subject is more or less difficult, and I

* Epist. vii. 9.

find my memory able to retain it. Then I call for my amanuensis, and having opened the windows, I dictate to him what I have composed ; then I dismiss him for a while, and call him in again. About ten or eleven (for I do not observe any fixed hour), according to the weather, I walk on the terrace or in the colonnade, and then I think over or dictate what I had left unfinished. Then I have a drive, and employ myself as before, and find this change of scene refreshing to my mind, and it enables me to apply it with more vigour. On my return I take a short nap ; then I stroll out, and repeat aloud a Greek or Latin speech, not so much to strengthen my voice as my digestion, though my voice is improved at the same time. I then have another stroll, take my usual exercise, and bathe. At dinner, if I have only my wife or a few friends with me, a book is read to us, and after dinner we have some music or a little play acted. Then I walk out with my friends, among whom are some men of learning. Thus we pass the evening in various conversation, and the day, even when it is at the longest, soon comes to an end. Sometimes I make a little change in this order. If I have remained in bed, or taken a longer walk than usual, I have a ride instead of a drive, after having read aloud one or two speeches. Thus I get more exercise in less time. My friends now and then look in upon me from the neighbouring villages, and occasionally, when I am tired, their visits are a pleasant relief. Sometimes I hunt, but I always take my notebook with me, so that if I get no sport, I may at any rate bring something back with me. Part of my time

is given to my tenants, though not so much as they would like. Their rustic squabbles make me return with fresh zest to my studies and more cultivated occupations."

There is an amusing letter, creditable to the writer's good taste and feeling, in which Pliny tells us how he treated his guests when he gave a dinner-party. It was common enough among the rich men of the time—those, of course, especially who had suddenly acquired wealth by disreputable means—to draw very marked distinctions in the company when they entertained. Readers of Juvenal will remember his laughable description of Virro's party, how the great man treated his poorer and less important guests with conspicuous contempt. The dishes set before them contained the coarsest and most indigestible fare, the wine was like vinegar, and a slave stood over them to see that they did not attempt to pocket some of the jewels with which the drinking-cups were adorned. It was once Pliny's misfortune to have to dine, as a comparative stranger, with a man like Virro, who thought himself (so Pliny says) an exceedingly elegant and attentive host, but who really combined expense with stinginess. There were three kinds of wine; the best he reserved for himself and Pliny, the next best for his inferior friends, while the worst was given to his freedmen and to those of Pliny, who, it appears, were present. One of the guests who sat by Pliny observed the arrangement, and turning round asked him what he thought of it, and whether he approved of it. Pliny shook

his head. "Well, then, what do you do on such occasions?" "I give all my guests the same wine," said Pliny, "for when I ask them to dinner, I look on my freedmen as my guests, and forget that they were once slaves." The letter in which this anecdote occurs is addressed to Junius Avitus, who, it seems, was a young man at the time, just entering into fashionable society. "Take care," says Pliny, "that you avoid above everything this new-fangled idea of combining a show of splendour with actual meanness: either, by itself, is bad enough; when combined, they are simply disgusting."

In a letter, in which he accepts an invitation to dinner, he says to his friend: "I must have a clear understanding with you that your dinner is not to be very long and elaborate; only let there be plenty of the sort of conversation in which Socrates and his friends indulged themselves, and even that must be limited as to time, since I have official engagements early in the morning." Once one of Pliny's friends, who had promised to dine with him, disappointed him. "I will bring an action against you," Pliny replies, "and I will lay my damages at a high amount." He then describes the *menu*, which seems to have been singularly light, fruits and vegetables largely preponderating in it. Still, Pliny says there were attractions of no mean kind. There was to have been a reading, or some acting, or some music, perhaps all in succession. He playfully hints that his friend would have preferred a less refined entertainment. From what we know of him we can thoroughly believe what

he says to his friend in conclusion : “ You may have a more splendid and expensive dinner in many houses ; there is not one in which you can dine with more cheerful accompaniments, and feel yourself more at ease, than in mine.”

- Pliny's tastes were altogether those of a cultivated man. Many men of the time, no doubt, resembled him, and thoroughly hated the vulgarity which they so often saw associated with enormous wealth. One of the chief, and in popular estimation one of the most attractive, features of life in Rome was the annual celebration of the great games—the games of the circus, as they were called—during the first days of September. In one of Pliny's letters we have his general opinion about them, which was substantially the same as that of the man he admired so much—Cicero. He is writing to a friend who had very possibly wondered how Pliny, whom he knew to be in Rome, came to be absent from the seats allotted to the senators for the grand spectacle. He had passed, he says, all the time amid his books and papers, and had thoroughly enjoyed the quiet. The games, he says, have really nothing in them which one would care to see more than once. Even the spectators, he hints, are not so much drawn by the attractions of the sight itself as by a spirit of gambling, to which a wide scope had been given in Domitian's reign by the chariot-races, and the six companies which engaged in them, and divided the popular sympathies. Yet it is certain that many of the best men of the time frequently witnessed these spectacles. Very possibly a senator who was never seen

in his place would have been a marked man, and incurred actual peril. Even in the better times of imperialism it may have been unadvisable for a man of rank and position to have seemed to protest by his habitual absence against so popular an amusement. The letter from which we have been quoting may, and we think, probably did, reflect Pliny's genuine sentiments; but, at the same time, we must admit that it looks a little as if he was anxious to impress his friend with the delicacy and refinement of his tastes. He is certainly inconsistent with himself when we find him in another letter praising a friend who had exhibited a magnificent spectacle of gladiators at Verona, and expressing his regret that the African leopards which had been purchased for the show were detained by stress of weather, and arrived too late.

It does not appear that Pliny had any definite philosophical opinions. He liked the society of philosophers as agreeable and intellectual men, but he never shows any trace of having adopted the dogmas of either Stoicism or Epicureanism. Had he done so, we may feel sure that his communicative disposition would not have allowed him to conceal his preference. He was of too gentle and sympathising a temper to attach himself decidedly to any one set of opinions. It would be interesting to know what he thought about Providence, about the direction of human affairs, and about such questions as a future state and the immortality of the soul. All these subjects he must have heard discussed from the most various points of view. It seems very unlikely that he had any matured

opinions about them. Sometimes in his letters we come across passages which look as if he believed in the unseen world, and in the possibility of occasional revelations from it. His mind appears to have had what we may call a religious basis. There is a very remarkable letter which strikingly reminds us of a modern ghost-story. It is an anecdote about a haunted house. There was a house at Athens which had long been deserted because frightful noises were heard in it during the stillness of night, and the apparition of a grisly old man, with a long and unkempt beard, who had chains on his hands and feet, and rattled them in a horrible manner, was to be seen in one of its desolate chambers. It remained, as may be supposed, unlet, till a philosopher, by name Athenodorus, came to Athens, and professed his willingness to take the house; all the more, says Pliny, because of its evil repute. He at once became the tenant, and as he sat the first evening in one of the outer rooms, he concentrated his whole attention on his philosophical studies. Surrounded with his books and papers, he felt sure that his imagination would not be distracted by any idle and unreal terrors. In the silence of midnight he hears the clanking of chains, and though he fixes his mind yet more steadily on his work, the noise increases, and seems to be on the threshold of his chamber. He looks behind him and sees the apparition, which makes signs to him, and on his again returning to his paper, stands over him as he writes, shaking and rattling its fetters. Again he looks behind him, takes a light, and follows the figure. The spectre moves

slowly, as though encumbered by the weight of the chains ; then it turns aside into the courtyard and vanishes. The philosopher marks the place of its disappearance with some leaves. The next day he goes to the magistrates and asks them to have the spot dug up. Some bones are found belonging to a corpse which had long since rotted in the earth, with chains attached to them. These are carefully collected, and are then publicly interred, after which the house is perfectly free from the apparition. Pliny's comment on this strange story is as follows : " I believe the word of those who affirm all this." The tone of this letter would certainly suggest to us that Pliny would have been inclined to accept the alleged marvels of modern spiritualism. At the close of it he relates two singular incidents which had come within his own knowledge, and to which he attributed great significance. One of his freedmen was sleeping in the same bed with his younger brother. The latter dreamt that he saw some one sitting on the couch, who with a pair of scissors approached his head and cut off some locks of hair. In the morning he found that the top of his head was shorn, and he saw the hair on the ground. On another occasion one of Pliny's slaves was sleeping with several of his companions in the slaves' dormitory. Two men clothed in white appeared to him to enter the room by the window, and to clip his locks as he lay in bed. They then disappeared. The morning showed that the dream was a reality ; the scattered locks of hair were to be seen round the boy. Pliny half looked on these two incidents as omens which

pointed to his fortunate escape of the fate of many of his friends under Domitian. "Nothing particularly noteworthy," he says, "followed, except perhaps the circumstance that in Domitian's time I was never the subject of an accusation, though I should have been had Domitian, during whose reign these incidents occurred, lived longer. A paper was found in his desk in which was written an accusation against me by Carus Metius." "Hence one may conjecture," he adds, "that, since accused persons usually let their hair grow long, the cutting off of my two slaves' hair was an intimation of the averting of a peril which was hanging over me." Pliny had no doubt much good sense, yet one would infer from all this that he was by no means without a taint of superstition. The age, it must be remembered, while sceptical and unbelieving in one sense, was also addicted to marvels and prodigies; and the best and wisest men, having no distinct and definite assurance about the mysteries of the unseen world, could not rise above some of the lower and weaker tendencies of the period.

We see from Pliny's Letters that suicide was very frequent among the Romans of his time. His friend Corellius Rufus, and the rich and luxurious Silius Italicus, had both died a voluntary death with the most cool and deliberate purpose. He also tells, with manifest approval, the story of a most determined act of suicide which had happened in the neighbourhood of his own native town. He had been sailing with an elderly friend on the Lake of Como, and had had pointed out to him a house with a chamber projecting over the

water, from which a lady, a native of Comum, had thrown herself together with her husband. The man was afflicted with a painful and incurable disease, and his wife, convinced of the hopelessness of his recovery, urged him to die, and was, in Pliny's words, "his companion in death, nay, more, his guide, his example, and the constraining cause of the deed." She bound herself to him, and both perished together. Pliny wonders that he never before heard of the incident. The action, he says, was equal to the splendid self-devotion of Arria, but the actor was less famous. We can understand how much there was in the circumstances of the imperial period, even in its brighter days, to render the interest in life less vivid than with ourselves. The very luxury with which a wealthy Roman was as a matter of course surrounded may well have become tiresome and oppressive, and a comparatively slight cause may have been enough to prevail on him to escape from its *ennui*. On the whole, the teachings of the Stoic philosophy encouraged a healthier view of life, and no doubt braced up many who were wavering to bear with patience present ills and troubles. Pliny seems to have generally approved this aspect of Stoicism. One of his friends was suffering from a tedious and severe illness, and had made up his mind that, if the physicians should pronounce it incurable, he would put an end to his life. Should, however, there be a prospect of ultimate recovery, he was determined to bear with it, though it might be long and painful; this, he thought, he owed to his wife, to his daughter, to his friends, and, among others, to Pliny. His resolution is heartily commended

by Pliny as in the highest degree noble and praiseworthy. "To rush on death," he says, "in a rash and headlong fashion, is a vulgar and commonplace act ; to weigh and anxiously consider the various motives which urge one to it, and to choose between life and death according to the guidance of reason, is the mark of a great mind." He thus satisfies himself with a sort of compromise, leaning, however, to the better view, from which the Stoics in theory allowed no exception.

Imperialism is necessarily unfavourable to the development of political opinions. Those of Pliny were perhaps somewhat colourless. It would have been absurd affectation in him to have professed attachment to the old republican ideas, which he as well as Tacitus knew could not possibly be revived.

In the senate, indeed, which still preserved something of its old state, if not of its power, he always felt the liveliest interest. He frequently speaks of its proceedings, and expresses no little delight and pride when these really possessed something of the importance which accorded with the nominal dignity of the assembly. More than once he mentions measures which were being taken, either by its own or by the Emperor's action, to increase its efficiency. One of these passages bears so closely on a subject which is just now on the surface in our own political life, that, though it has recently been quoted more than once, we must not omit it. Open voting in the election to offices of state had caused, it seems, in the senate, proceedings so un-

dignified, and even disgraceful, that recourse was had to the ballot. "I fear," says Pliny, "lest, as time goes on, abuses spring up from this very remedy of ours. There is a danger lest, when our votes are silent, a want of honourable feeling come upon us. For how few are equally careful of honour in secret and in public! Many stand in awe of public opinion, few of conscience."

But it was to the Emperor, as the real power in the state, that he was compelled to look. Under a ruler like Trajan he may well have sincerely believed that freedom and order were so united as to make the prospects of the Roman world really hopeful. His Panegyric of Trajan has unquestionably an unpleasant tone of flattery running through its artificial and elaborate sentences; and it is, we feel, the last of his compositions from which we should wish to form an estimate of him. Still, there can be no reason for doubting that it reflected Pliny's genuine political sentiments. There is a perpetual contrast between Trajan's beneficent rule and Domitian's hideous tyranny. Thought and speech were now free, fear unknown; it was easy and pleasant to obey. The world was happy and contented, and every stranger was anxious to obtain the safeguard and privileges of Roman citizenship. The comfort and prosperity of the provinces were anxiously studied. "How must every province," says Pliny, "rejoice in being under our protection, now that a prince is on the throne able and willing to transfer from one region to another

the produce of the earth—a prince who purveys for lands separated from Rome by seas and continents, as he provides for the capital itself. Nowhere is the climate so constant as to insure universal fertility, but Cæsar has it in his power to correct the season's caprice; and although he cannot make a blighted or barren tract immediately fruitful, he can arrest the hand of famine. That we should have one master over us is infinitely better for us than a freedom full of strife and discord." Pliny's good-nature, and wish to see people happy and comfortable, naturally inclined him to think well of a government which secured for the world at large so many material advantages, while it allowed the men of cultivation and of letters to express their thoughts as freely as his friend Tacitus was able to do in his *Annals* and *History*.

Of Pliny's last days, of even the date of his death, we know nothing. We gather that he was alive A.D. 107 from one of the Letters, in which he complains that ten years after the death of Verginius Rufus (who died A.D. 97) the monument which ought to have been erected over his grave was still unfinished. Pliny was then in his forty-seventh year. The Letters were published in his lifetime, and as no later allusion to contemporary events occurs in them, their appearance may be conjecturally attributed to that or the following year. From that time he disappears entirely from our sight. It is not without pain that we take so abrupt a leave of one of the most interesting characters of antiquity. We cannot, indeed, call him a man of genius;

and we may trace some weak lines in the portrait which he has painted for us of himself. But it would not be easy to find in ancient literature, or indeed in modern, one who approaches more closely to the best modern ideal of a well-bred, cultivated, blameless gentleman.

END OF PLINY'S LETTERS.





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